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THE WRITINGS OF JOHN BURROUGHS

WITH PORTRAITS AND MANY ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME XII

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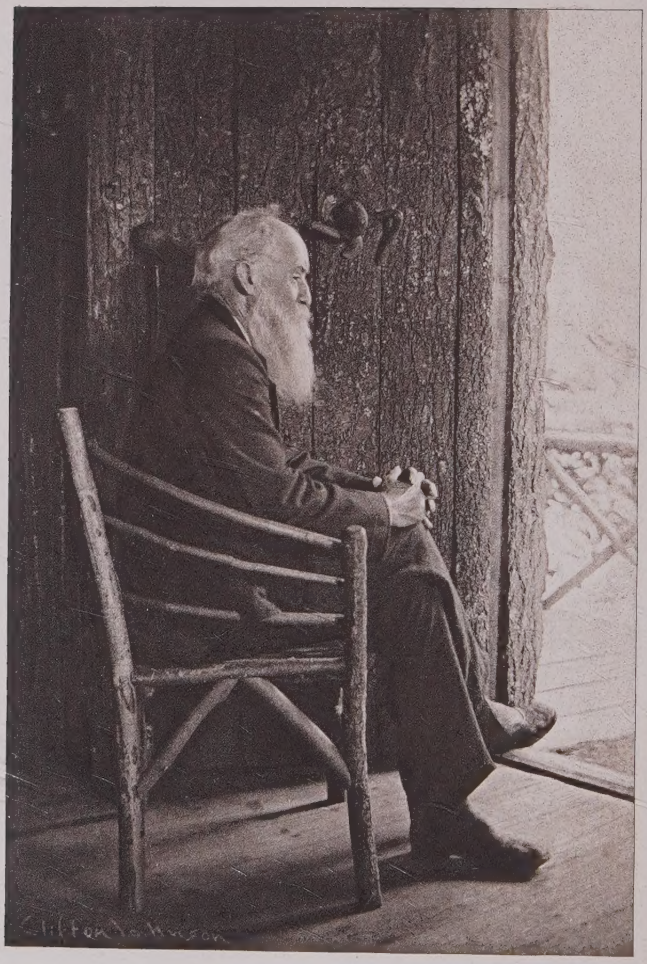

THE WRITINGS
OF
JOHN BURROUGHS

XII

LITERARY VALUES AND OTHER PAPERS

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JOHN BURROUGHS IN THE DOORWAY, SLABSIDES *Frontispiece*

From a photograph by Clifton Johnson

THE STUDY, RIVERBY 274

From a photograph by Clifton Johnson

LITERARY VALUES

LITERARY VALUES

I

LITERARY VALUES

I

THE day inevitably comes to every writer when he must take his place amid the silent throngs of the past, when no new work from his pen can call attention to him afresh, when the partiality of his friends no longer counts, when his friends and admirers are themselves gathered to the same silent throng, and the spirit of the day in which he wrote has given place to the spirit of another and a different day. How, oh, how will it fare with him then? How is it going to fare with Lowell and Longfellow and Whittier and Emerson and all the rest of them? How has it fared with so many names in the past, that were, in their own day, on all men's tongues? Of the names just mentioned, Whittier and Emerson shared more in a particular movement of thought and morals of the times in which they lived than did the other two, and to that extent are they in danger of dropping out and losing their vogue. Both had a significance to their own day and genera-

tion that they can hardly have to any other. The new times will have new soul maladies and need other soul doctors. The fashions of this world pass away — fashions in thought, in style, in humor, in morals, as well as in anything else.

As men strip for a race, so must an author strip for this race with time. All that is purely local and accidental in him will only impede him; all that is put on or assumed will impede him — his affectations, his insincerities, his imitations; only what is vital and real in him, and is subdued to the proper harmony and proportion, will count. A malformed giant will not in this race keep pace with the lesser but better-built stripling. How many more learned and ponderous tomes has Gilbert White's little book left behind! Mere novelty, how short-lived is that! Every age will have its own novelties. Every age will have its own hobbies and hobbyists, its own clowns, its own follies and fashions and infatuations. What every age will not have in the same measure is sanity, proportion, health, penetration, simplicity. The strained and overwrought, the fantastic and far-fetched, are sure to drop out. Every pronounced style, like Carlyle's, is sure to suffer. The obscurities and affectations of some recent English poets and novelists are certain to drag them down. Browning, with his sudden leaps and stops, and all that Italian rubbish, is fearfully handicapped.

Things do not endure in this world without a certain singleness and continence. Trees do not grow and stand upright without a certain balance and proportion. A man does not live out half his days without a certain simplicity of life. Excesses, irregularities, violences, kill him. It is the same with books — they, too, are under the same law; they hold the gift of life on the same terms. Only an honest book can live; only absolute sincerity can stand the test of time. Any selfish or secondary motive vitiates a work of art, as it vitiates a religious life. Indeed, I doubt if we fully appreciate the literary value of the staple, fundamental human virtues and qualities — probity, directness, simplicity, sincerity, love. There is just as much room and need for the exercise of these qualities in the making of a book as in the building of a house, or in a business career. How conspicuous they are in all the enduring books — in Bunyan, in Walton, in Defoe, in the Bible! It is they that keep alive such a book as "Two Years before the Mast," which Stevenson pronounced the best sea-story in the language, as it undoubtedly is. None of Stevenson's books have quite this probity and singleness of purpose, or show this effacement of the writer by the man. It might be said that our interest in such books is not literary at all, but purely human, like our interest in "Robinson Crusoe," or in life and things themselves. The experience itself of a sailor's

life, however, would be to most of us very prosy and distasteful. Hence there is something in the record, something in the man behind the record, that colors his pages, and that is the source of our interest. This personal element, this flavor of character, is the salt of literature. Without it, the page is savorless.

II

It is curious what an uncertain and seemingly capricious thing literary value is. How often it refuses to appear when diligently sought for, labored for, prayed for; and then comes without call to some simple soul that never gave it a thought. Learning cannot compass it, rhetoric cannot compass it, study cannot compass it. Mere wealth of language is entirely inadequate. It is like religion: often those who have it most have it least, and those who have it least have it most. In the works of the great composers — Gibbon, De Quincey, Macaulay — it is a conscious, deliberate product. Then, in other works, the very absence of the literary motive and interest gives an æsthetic pleasure.

One is surprised to read the remark of the "Saturday Review" on the published letters of Whitman, — letters that have no extrinsic literary value whatever, not one word of style, — namely, that few books are so well calculated to "purge the soul of nonsense;" and the remark of the fastidious Henry James on the same subject, that, with all their

enormities of the common, the letters are positively delightful. Here, again, the source of our interest is undoubtedly in the personal revelation, — the type of man we see through the letters, and not in any wit or wisdom lodged in the letters themselves.

One reader seeks religious or moral values alone in the works he reads; another seeks scientific or philosophical values; another, artistic and literary values; others, again, purely human values. No one, I think, would read Scott or Dickens for purely artistic values, while, on the other hand, it seems to me that one would go to Mr. James or to Mr. Howells for little else. One might read Froude with pleasure who had little confidence in him as an historian, but one could hardly read Freeman and discount him in the same way; one might have great delight in Ruskin, who repudiated much of his teaching.

I suppose one comes to like plain literature as he comes to like plain clothes, plain manners, simple living. What grows with us is the taste for the genuine, the real. The less a writer's style takes thought of itself, the better we like it. The less his dress, his equipage, his house, concern themselves about appearances, the more we are pleased with them. Let the purpose be entirely serious, and let the seriousness be pushed till it suggests the heroic; that is what we crave as we grow older and tire of the vanities and shams of the world.

LITERARY VALUES

To have literary value is not necessarily to suggest books or literature; it is to possess a certain genuineness and seriousness that is like the validity of real things. See how much better literature Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg is than the more elaborate and scholarly address of Everett on the same occasion. General Grant's "Memoirs" have a higher literary value than those of any other general in our Civil War, mainly because of the greater simplicity, seriousness, and directness of the personality they reveal. There is no more vanity and make-believe in the book than there was in the man. Any touch of the elemental, of the veracity and singleness of the natural forces, gives value to a man's utterances, and Lincoln and Grant were undoubtedly the two most elemental men brought out by the war. The literary value of the Bible, doubtless, arises largely from its elemental character. The utterances of simple, unlettered men — farmers, sailors, soldiers — often have great force and impressiveness from the same cause; there are in them the virtue and seriousness of real things. One great danger of schools, colleges, libraries, is that they tend to kill or to overlay this elemental quality in a man — to make the poet speak from his culture instead of from his heart. "To speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movement of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the road-

side, is the flawless triumph of art;" and who so likely to do this as the simple, unbookish man? Hence Sainte-Beuve says the peasant always has style.

In fiction the literary value resides in several different things, as the characterization, the action, the plot, and the style; sometimes more in one, sometimes more in another. In Scott, for instance, it is found in the characters and the action; the style is commonplace. In George Eliot, the action, the dramatic power, is the weakest factor. In Mr. Howells we care very little for the people, but the art, the style, is a perpetual delight. In Hawthorne our pleasure, again, is more evenly distributed. In Poe the plot and the style interest us. In Dickens it is the character and the action. The novelist has many strings to his bow, and he can get along very well without style, but what can the poet, the historian, the essayist, the critic, do without style — that is, without that vital, intimate, personal relation between the man and his language which seems to be the secret of style? The true poet makes the words his own; he fills them with his own quality, though they be the common property of all. This is why language, in the hands of the born writer, is not the mere garment of thought, not even a perfectly adjusted and transparent garment, as a French writer puts it. It is a garment only as the body is the garment of the soul. This is why a writer

with a style loses so much in a translation, while with the ordinary composer translation is little more than a change of garments.

I should say that the literary value of the modern French writers and critics resides more in their style than in anything else, while with the German it resides least in the style; in the English it resides in both thought and style. The French fall below the English in lyric poetry, because, while the Frenchman has more vanity, he has less egoism, and hence less power to make the universe speak through him. The solitude of the lyric is too much for his intensely social nature, while he excels in the light dramatic forms for this very reason. He has more power of intellectual metamorphosis.

Apart from style and the other qualities I have mentioned, is another gift, the gift of narration — the story-teller's gift, which novelists have in varying degrees. Probably few of them have this talent in so large a measure as Wilkie Collins had it, yet this power does not of itself seem sufficient to save his work from oblivion. Still apart from these qualities, and of high literary worth, and apart from the attractiveness of the subject-matter, is the power to interest. Can you interest me in what you have to say, by your manner of saying it? This is one of the most intimate and personal gifts of all. No matter what the subject, some writers, like some speakers, catch our attention at once, and hold it to

the end. They appear to be telling us some important bit of news which they are in a hurry to be delivered of. No time or words are wasted. There is something special and imminent in the look and tone. The sentences are definitely aimed. The man knows what he wants to say and is himself interested in it. His mind is not somnolent or stagnant; the style is specific and direct — no benumbing effects of vague and featureless generalizations. The thoughts move, they make a current, and the reader quickly yields himself to it. How soon we tire of the mumbling, soliloquizing style, where the writer seems talking to himself. He must talk to his reader and must catch his eye.

Then those dead-level sentences that seem to return forever into themselves, that have no direction or fall, that do not point and hurry to some definite conclusion, — we soon yawn over these too.

What rare power the late Henry George had to invest his subject with interest! What a current in his book "Progress and Poverty"! — While it seems to me that in his "Social Evolution" Benjamin Kidd suffers from the want of this talent; I do not get the full force of his periods at the first reading.

III

Literature abounds in attempts to define literature. One of the most strenuous and thorough-going definitions I have seen has lately been published by one

of our college professors — it is a most determined attempt to corral the whole subject. "Nothing belongs to real literature," says the professor, "unless it consists of written words that constitute a carrying statement which makes sense, arranged rhythmically, euphoniously, and harmoniously, and so chosen as to connote an adequate number of ideas and things, the suggestion of which will call up in the reader sustained emotions which do not produce undue tension, and in which the element of pleasure predominates, on the whole, over that of pain. Practically," the writer goes on to say, "every word of this description should be kept in our minds, so that we may consciously apply it as a test to any piece of writing about the literary character of which we are in doubt."

Fancy a reader, in his quest for the real article, going about with this drag-net of a paragraph in his mind. Will the definition or description bear turning around upon itself? Is it a good sample of literary art? The exactness and literalness of science are seldom permissible in literature. That a definition of anything may have literary value it must possess a certain indirect and imaginative character, as when Carlyle defined poetry as the heroic of speech. Contrast with the above John Morley's definition of literature: "All the books — and they are not so many — where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity, and attrac-

tion of form." This is much better literature, because the language is much more flexible and imaginative. It imparts more warmth to the mind; it is more suggestive, while as a literary touchstone it is just as available.

Good literature may be a much simpler thing than our teachers would lead us to believe. The prattle of a child may have rare literary value. The little Parisian girl who, when asked by a lady the price of the trinkets she offered for sale, replied, "Judge for yourself, madam; I have tasted no food since yesterday," expressed herself with consummate art. If she had said simply, "Whatever your ladyship pleases to give," her reply would have been graceful, but commonplace. By the personal turn which she gave it, she added almost a lyrical touch. When Thackeray changed the title of one of his novels from "Scenes from Town Life," or some such title, to "Vanity Fair," he achieved a stroke of art. It is said that a now famous line of Keats was first written thus:

"A thing of beauty is a continual joy."

How the effect of the line was heightened by the change of one word, and itself became "a joy forever." Poe, too, altered two lines of his with like magical effect, when for

"To the beauty of fair Greece,
And the grandeur of old Rome,"

he wrote:

"To the glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome."

The phrase "well of pure English" conveys the same idea as "well of English undefiled," but how much greater the artistic value of the latter than of the former! Thus the literary value of a sentence may turn upon a single word.

The everyday speech of the people is often full of the stuff of which literature is made. No poet could invent better epithets and phrases than abound in the common vernacular. The sayings and proverbs of a people are also, for the most part, of the pure gold of literature.

One trouble with all definitions of literature is that they proceed upon the theory that literature is a definite something that may be determined by definite tests like gold or silver, whereas it is more like life or nature itself. It is not so much something as the visible manifestation of something; it assumes infinite forms, and is of infinite degrees of potency. There is great literature, and there is feeble and commonplace literature: a romance by Hawthorne and a novel by Haggard; a poem by Tennyson and a poem by Tupper; an essay by Emerson and an essay by John Forster — all literature, all touching the emotions and the imagination with varying degrees of power, and yet separated by a gulf. There are no degrees of excellence in gold or

silver, but there are all degrees of excellence in literature. How hard it is to tell what makes a true poem, a lasting poem! When one asks himself what it is, how many things arise, how hard to narrow the list down to a few things! Is it beauty? Then what is beauty? One meets with beautiful poems every day that he never thinks of or recurs to again. It is certain that without one thing there is no real poetry — genuine passion. The fire came down out of heaven and consumed Elijah's offering because Elijah was sincere. Plan and build your poem never so deftly, mankind will not permanently care for it unless it has genuine feeling. It must be impassioned.

The genus Literature includes many species, as novels, poems, essays, histories, etc., but our business with them all is about the same — they are books that we read for their own sake. We read the papers for the news, we read a work of science for the facts and the conclusions, but a work of literature is an end in and of itself. We read it for the pleasure and the stimulus it affords us, apart from any other consideration. It exhibits such a play of mind and emotion upon the facts of life and nature as results in our own mental and spiritual enrichment and edification.

Another thing is true of the best literature: we cannot separate our pleasure and profit in the subject-matter from our pleasure and profit in the per-

sonality of the writer. We do not know whether it is Hawthorne himself that we most delight in, or his style and the characters and the action of his romance. One thing is quite certain: where there is no distinct personal flavor to the page, no stamp of a new individual force, we soon tire of it. The savor of every true literary production comes from the man himself. Hence, without attempting a formal definition of literature, one may say that the literary quality seems to arise from a certain vital relation of the writer with subject-matter. It is *his* subject; it blends with the very texture of his mind; his relation to it is primary and personal, not secondary and mechanical. The secret is not in any prescribed arrangement of the words — it is in the quality of mind or spirit that warms the words and shines through them. A good book, says Milton, is the precious life-blood of a master spirit. Unless there is blood in it, unless the vital currents of a rare spirit flow through it and vivify it, it has not the gift of life.

In all good literature we have a sense of touching something alive and real. The writer uses words not as tools or appliances; they are more like his hand or his eye or his ear — the living, palpable body of his thought, the incarnation of his spirit.

The true writer always establishes intimate and personal relations with his reader. He comes forth, he is not concealed; he is immanent in his words, we feel him, our spirits touch his spirit.

Style in letters is a quality of mind — a certain flavor imparted to words by the personality back of them. Pass language through one mind and it is tasteless and colorless; pass it through another, and it acquires an entirely new value and significance and gives us a unique pleasure. In the one case the sentences are artificial; in the other they bud and sprout out of the man himself as naturally as the plants and trees out of the soil.

There is nothing else in the world so sensitive and chameleon-like as language; it takes on at once the hue and quality of the mind that uses it. See how neutral and impersonal, or old and worn and faded the words look in the pages of some writers, then see how drastic or new and individual they become when a mind of another type marshals them into sentences. What vigor and life in them! they seem to have been newly coined since we last met them. It is the test of a writer's real worth — does the language tarnish, as it were, in his hand, or is it brightened and freshened in his use?

A book may contain valuable truths and sound sentiments of universal appeal, but if the literary coinage is feeble, if the page is not strongly individualized, freshly and clearly stamped by the purpose of the writer, it cannot take rank as good literature. To become literature, truth must be perpetually reborn, reincarnated, and begin life anew.

A successful utterance always has value, always

has truth, though in its purely intellectual aspects it may not correspond with the truth as we see it. I cannot accept all of Ruskin's views upon our civilization or all of Tolstoi's upon art, yet I see that they speak the truth as it defines itself to their minds and feelings. A counter-statement may be equally true. The struggle for existence goes on in the ideal world as well as in the real. The strongest mind, the fittest statement, survives for the time being. That a system of philosophy or religion perishes or is laid aside is not because it is not or was not true, but because it is not true to the new minds and under the new conditions. It no longer expresses what the world thinks and feels. It is outgrown. Was not Calvinism true to our fathers? It is no longer true to us because we were born at a later day in the world. With regard to truths of science, we may say, once a truth always a truth, because the world of fact and of things is always under the same law, but the truth of sentiments and emotions changes with changing minds and hearts. The tree of life, unlike all other trees, bears different fruit to each generation. What our fathers found nourishing and satisfying in religion, in art, in philosophy, we find tasteless and stale. Every gospel has its day. The moral and intellectual horizon of the race is perpetually changing.

IV

In our modern democratic communities the moral sense is no doubt higher than it was in the earlier ages, while the artistic or æsthetic sense is lower. In the Athenian the artistic sense was far above the moral; in the Puritan the reverse was the case. The Latin races seem to have a greater genius for art than the Teutonic, while the latter excel in virtue. In this country, good taste exists in streaks and spots, or sporadically here and there. There does not seem to be enough to go around, or the supply is intermittent. One writer has it and another has it not, or one has it to-day and not to-morrow; one moment he writes with grace and simplicity, the next he falls into crudenesses or affectations. There is not enough leaven to leaven the whole lump. Some of our most eminent literary men, such as Lowell and Dr. Holmes, are guilty of occasional lapses from good taste, and probably in the work of none of them do we see the thorough ripening and mellowing of taste that mark the productions of the older and more centralized European communities. One of our college presidents, writing upon a serious ethical subject, allows himself such rhetoric as this: "Experiment and inference are the hook and line by which Science fishes the dry formulas out of the fluid fact. Art, on the other hand, undertakes to stock the stream with choice specimens of her own

breeding and selection." We can hardly say of such metaphors what Sainte-Beuve said of Montaigne's, namely, that they are of the kind that are never "detached from the thought," and that they "seize it in its very centre, in its interior, and join and bind it."

V

The keener appreciation in Europe of literature as a fine art is no doubt the main reason why Poe is looked upon over there as our most noteworthy poet. Poe certainly had a more consummate art than any other American singer, and his productions are more completely the outcome of that art. They are literary feats. "The Raven" was as deliberately planned and wrought out as is any piece of mechanism. Its inspiration is verbal and technical. "The truest poetry is most feigning," says Touchstone, and this is mainly the conception of poetry that prevails in European literary circles. Poe's poetry is artistic feigning, like good acting. It is to that extent disinterested. He does not speak for himself, but for the artistic spirit. He has never been popular in this country, for the reason that art, as such, is far less appreciated here than abroad. The stress of life here is upon the moral and intellectual elements much more than upon the æsthetic. We demand a message of the poet, or that he shall teach us how to live. Poe had no message but that of art; he made no contribution to our stock of

moral ideas; he made no appeal to the conscience or manhood of the race; he did not touch the great common workaday mind of our people. He is more akin to the Latin than to the Anglo-Saxon. Hence his deepest impression seems to have been made upon the French mind. In all our New England poets the voice of humanity, of patriotism, of religious ideas, of strenuous moral purpose, speaks. Art is subordinated to various human passions and emotions. In Poe alone are these emotions subordinated to art. In Poe alone is the effort mainly a verbal and technical one. In him alone is the man lost in the artist. To evoke music from language is his constant aim. No other American poet approaches him in this kind of verbal mastery, in this unfettered creative technical power. In ease, in splendor, in audacity, he is like a bird. One may understand and admire him and not be touched by him. To be moved to anything but admiration is foreign to pure art. Would one make meat and drink of it? Our reading is selfish, we seek our own, we are drawn to the book that is going our way. Can we appreciate beyond our own personal tastes and needs? Can we see the excellence of the impersonal and the disinterested? We want to be touched in some special and intimate way; but art touches us in a general and impersonal way. No one could take to himself Shakespeare, or Milton's "Lycidas," or Keats's odes as directed especially

to his own personal wants and aspirations. We forget ourselves in reading these things, and share for the time the sentiment of pure art, which lives in the universal. How crude the art of Whittier compared with that of Poe, and yet Whittier has touched and moved his countrymen, and Poe has not. There is much more of the substance of character, of patriotism, of strenuous New England life, in the one than in the other. "Snow-Bound" is a metrical transcript from experience; not a creation of the imagination, but a touched-up copy from the memory. We cannot say this of "The Bells" or "The Raven," or of the work of Milton or Keats or Tennyson. Whittier sings what he feels; it all has a root in his own experience. The great poet feigns the emotion and makes it real to us.

We complain of much current verse that it has no feeling. The trouble is not that the poets feign, but that the feigning is feeble; it begets no emotion in us. It simulates, but does not stimulate.

It is not Wordsworth's art that makes him great; it is his profound poetic emotion when in the presence of simple, common things. Tennyson's art, or Swinburne's art, is much finer, but the poetic emotion back of it is less profound and elemental.

Emerson's art is crude, but the stress of his poetic emotion is great; the song is burdened with profound meanings to our moral and spiritual nature.

Poe has no such burden; there is not one crumb of the bread of life in him, but there is plenty of the elixir of the imagination.

This passion for art, so characteristic of the Old World, is seen in its full force in such a writer as Flaubert. Flaubert was a devotee of the doctrine of art for art's sake. He cared nothing for mere authors, but only for "writers;" the work must be the conscious and deliberate product of the author's literary and inventive powers, and in no way involve his character, temperament, or personality. The more it was written, the more it savored of deliberate plan and purpose, — in other words, the less it was the product of fate, race, or of anything local, individual, inevitable, — the more it pleased him. Art, and not nature, was his aspiration. And this view has more currency in Europe than in this country. In some extreme cases it becomes what one may fairly call the art disease. Baudelaire, for instance, as quoted by Tolstoi, expressed a preference for a painted woman's face over one showing its natural color, "and for metal trees and a theatrical imitation of water, rather than real trees and real water." Thus does an overweening passion for art degenerate into a love for the artificial for its own sake. In the cultivation of letters there seems always to be a danger that we shall come to value things, not for their own sake, but for the literary effects that may be wrought out of them. The great artist,

I take it, is primarily in love with life and things, and not with art. On these terms alone is his work fresh and stimulating and filled with good arterial blood.

VI

Teaching literature is like teaching religion. You can give only the dry bones of the matter in either case. But the dry bones of theology are not religion, and the dry bones of rhetoric are not literature. The flesh-and-blood reality is alone of value, and this cannot be taught, it must be felt and experienced.

The class in literature studies an author's sentence-structure and paragraphing, and doubtless could tell the author more about it than he knows himself. The probabilities are that he never thought a moment about his sentence-structure or his paragraphing. He has thought only of his subject-matter and how to express himself clearly and forcibly; the structure of his sentences takes care of itself. From every art certain rules and principles may be deduced, but the intelligent apprehension of those rules and principles no more leads to mastery in that art, or even helps to mastery in it, than a knowledge of the anatomy and the vital processes of the stomach helps a man to digest his dinner, or than the knowledge of the gunsmith helps make a good marksman. In other words the science of

any art is of little use to him who would practice that art. To be a fiddler you must fiddle and see others fiddle; to be a painter you must paint and study the painting of others; to be a writer you must write and familiarize yourself with the works of the best authors. Studying an author from the outside by bringing the light of rhetoric to bear upon him is of little profit. We must get inside of him, and we can only get inside of him through sympathy and appreciation. There is only one way to teach literature, only one vital way, and that is by reading it. The laboratory way may give one the dry bones of the subject, but not the living thing itself. If the teacher, by his own living voice and an occasional word of comment, can bring out the soul of a work, he may help the student's appreciation of it; he may, in a measure, impart to him his own larger and more intelligent appreciation of it. And that is a true service.

Young men and young women actually go to college to take a course in Shakespeare or Chaucer or Dante or the Arthurian legends. The course becomes a mere knowledge course, as Professor Corson suggests. My own first acquaintance with Milton was through an exercise in grammar. We parsed "Paradise Lost." Much of the current college study of Shakespeare is little better than parsing him. The minds of the pupils are focused upon every word and line of the text, as the microscope is focused

upon a fly's foot in the laboratory. The class probably dissects a frog or a star-fish one day, and a great poet the next, and it does both in about the same spirit. It falls upon one of these great plays like hens upon a bone in winter: no meaning of word or phrase escapes it, every line is literally picked to pieces; but of the poet himself, of that which makes him what he is, his tremendous dramatic power, how much do the students get? Very little, I fear. They have had an intellectual exercise and not an emotional experience. They have added to their knowledge, but have not taken a step in culture. To dig into the roots and origins of the great poets is like digging into the roots of an oak or a maple, the better to increase your appreciation of the beauty of the tree. There stands the tree in all its summer glory; will you really know it any better after you have laid bare every root and rootlet? There stand Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dante, Homer. Read them, give yourself to them, and master them if you are man enough. The poets are not to be analyzed, they are to be enjoyed; they are not to be studied, but to be loved; they are not for knowledge, but for culture — to enhance our appreciation of life and our mastery over its elements. All the mere facts about a poet's work are as chaff compared with the appreciation of one fine line or fine sentence. Why *study* a great poet at all after the manner of the dissecting-room? Why not rather seek to make

the acquaintance of his living soul and to feel its power?

The mere study of words, too, — of their origin and history, or of the relation of your own language to some other, — how little that avails! As little as a knowledge of the making and tempering of a sword would help a man to be a good swordsman. What avails in literature is a quick and delicate sense of the life and individuality of words — "a sense practiced as a blind man's touch," or as a musician's ear, so that the magic of the true style is at once felt and appreciated; this, and an equally quick and delicate sense of the life and individuality of things. "Is there any taste in the white of an egg?" No more is there in much merely correct writing. There is the use of language as the vehicle of knowledge, and there is the use of it as an instrument of the imagination. In Wordsworth's line,

"The last to parley with the setting sun,"

in Whitman's sentence,

"Oh, waves, I have fingered every shore with you,"

in Emerson's description of an Indian-summer day, "the day, immeasurably long, sleeps over the broad hills and warm, wide fields" — in these and such as these we see the imaginative use of words.

Most of the Dantean and Homeric and Shakespearean scholarship is the mere dust of time that

has accumulated upon these names. In the course of years it will accumulate upon Tennyson, and then we shall have Tennysonian scholars and learned dissertations upon some insignificant detail of his work. Think of the Shakespeareana with which literature is burdened! It is mostly mere shop litter and dust. In certain moods I think one may be pardoned for feeling that Shakespeare is fast becoming a curse to the human race. Of mere talk about him, it seems, there is to be no end. He has been the host of more literary parasites probably than any other name in history. He is edited and reëdited as if a cubit could be added to his stature by marginal notes and comments. On the contrary, the result is, for the most part, like a mere growth of underbrush that obscures the forest trees. The reader's attention is being constantly diverted from the main matter — he is being whipped in the face by insignificant twigs. Criticism may prune away what obscures a great author, but what shall we say when it obstructs the view of him by a multitude of unimportant questions?

The main aim of the teacher of literature should be to train and quicken the student's taste — his sense of the fitness and proportion of things — till he can detect the true from the false, or the excellent from the common. There is but one way to learn to detect the genuine from the counterfeit in any department of life, and that is by experience. Fa-

miliarize the student with the works of the real masters of literature and you have safeguarded him against the pretenders. After he has become acquainted with the look and the ring of the pure gold he is less likely to be imposed upon by the counterfeit. The end here indicated cannot be reached by analysis, or by a course in rhetoric and sentence-structure, or by a microscopical examination of the writer's vocabulary, but by direct sympathetic intercourse with the best literature, through the living voice, or through your own silent perusal of it. The great Dantean and Shakespearean scholar is usually the outcome of a mental habit that would make Dante and Shakespeare impossible.

So eminent a critic as Frederic Harrison is reported as praising this sentence from the new British author Maurice Hewlett: "In the milk of October dawns her calm brows had been dipped." The instructor in literature should be able to show his class why this is not good literature. The suggestion of brows dipped in milk is not a pleasant one. One cannot conceive of any brow the beauty of which would be enhanced by it, even by the milk of October dawns, if there were anything in October dawns that in the remotest way suggested milk. Mr. Hewlett is so in love with a crisp style that he describes his heroine as lying white and twisting on a couch, crisping and uncrisping her little hands.

Such things come from straining after novelty.

They proceed from an unripe taste. Men of real genius and power are at times guilty of such lapses, or go astray in quest of novel images. Walter Bagehot sometimes did. Writing of Sydney Smith, his rhetoric shows its teeth in this fashion: "Writers, like teeth, are divided into incisors and grinders; Sydney Smith was a molar. He did not run a long sharp argument into the interior of a question; he did not, in the common phrase, go deeply into it; but he kept it steadily under the contact of a strong, capable, jawlike understanding, pressing its surface, effacing its intricacies, grinding it down." Such a comparison has the merit of being vivid; it also has the demerit of an unworthy alliance, — it marries the noble and the ignoble. You cannot lift mastication up to the level of intellectual processes, and seriously to compare the two is to degrade the latter. Sydney Smith himself could not have been guilty of such bad taste.

Let me finish this chapter with a bit of prose from Ben Jonson.

"Some words are to be culled out for ornament and color, as we gather flowers to strow houses or make garlands; but they are better when they grow to our style; as in a meadow where, though the mere grass and greenness delight, yet the variety of flowers doth heighten and beautify."

II

ANALOGY — TRUE AND FALSE

I HAVE never seen any thorough examination of the grounds of analogy. The works on logic make but slight reference to them, yet the argument from analogy is one of the most frequent forms of argument, and one of the most convincing. It is so much easier to captivate the fancy with a pretty or striking figure than to move the judgment with sound reasons, — so much easier to be rhetorical than to be logical.

We say that seeing is believing; the rhetorician makes us see the thing; his picture appeals to the mind's visual sense, hence his power over us, though his analogies are more apt to be false than true. We love to see these agreements between thoughts and things, or between the subjective and the objective worlds, and a favorite thought with profound minds in all ages has been the identity or oneness which runs through creation.

"A vast similitude interlocks all," says Whitman, "spans all the objects of the universe and compactly holds and encloses them."

Everywhere in Nature Emerson said he saw the

figure of a disguised man. The method of the universe is intelligible to us because it is akin to our own minds. Our minds are rather akin to it and are derived from it. Emerson made much of this thought. The truth here indicated is undoubtedly the basis of all true analogy — this unity, this oneness of creation; but the analogies that "are constant and pervade Nature" are probably not so numerous as Emerson seemed to fancy. Thus one can hardly agree with him that there is "intent" of analogy between man's life and the seasons, because the seasons are not a universal fact of the globe, and man's life is. The four seasons are well defined in New England, but not in Ecuador.

The agreement of appearances is one thing, the identity of law and essence is another, and the agreement of man's life with the seasons must be considered accidental rather than intentional.

Language is full of symbols. We make the world without a symbol of the world within. We describe thoughts, and emotions, in the terms of an objective experience. Things furnish the moulds in which our ideas are cast. Size, proportion, mass, vista, vastness, height, depth, darkness, light, coarse, fine, centre, surface, order, chaos, and a thousand other terms, we apply alike to the world without and to the world within. We know a higher temperance than concerns the body, a finer digestion and assimilation than go on in it.

Our daily conversation is full of pictures and parables, or the emblematic use of things. From life looked at as a voyage, we get the symbolic use of anchor, compass, pole-star, helm, haven; from life considered as a battle, we read deep meanings in shield, armor, fencing, captain, citadel, panic, onset. Life regarded under the figure of husbandry gives us the expressive symbols of seedtime and harvest, planting and watering, tares and brambles, pruning and training, the chaff and the wheat. We talk in parables when we little suspect it. What various applications we make of such words as dregs, gutter, eclipse, satellite, hunger, thirst, kindle, brazen, echo, and hundreds of others. We speak of the reins of government, the sinews of war, the seeds of rebellion, the morning of youth, the evening of age, a flood of emotion, the torch of truth, burning with resentment, the veil of secrecy, the foundations of character, a ripple of laughter, incrusted dogmas, corrosive criticism. We say his spirits drooped, his mind soared, his heart softened, his brow darkened, his reputation was stabbed, he clinched his argument. We say his course was beset with pitfalls, his efforts were crowned with success, his eloquence was a torrent that carried all before it, and so on.

Burke calls attention to the metaphors that are taken from the sense of taste, as a sour temper, bitter curses, bitter fate; and, on the other hand, a sweet person, a sweet experience, and the like.

Other epithets are derived from the sense of touch, as a soft answer, a polished character, a cold reception, a sharp retort, a hard problem; or from the sense of sight, as brilliant, dazzling, color, light, shade; others from our sense of hearing, as discordant, echoing, reverberating, booming, grumbling. All trades, pursuits, occupations, furnish types or symbols for the mind. The word "whitewash" has become a very useful one, especially to political parties. Thoreau said he would not be as one who drives a nail into mere lath and plaster. Even the railroad has contributed useful terms, as sidetracked, down brakes, the red flag, way station, etc. Great men are like through trains that connect far-distant points; others are merely locals. From the builder we get the effective phrase and idea of scaffolding. So much in the world is mere scaffolding, so much in society is mere varnish and veneer. Life is said to have its "seamy side." The lever and the fulcrum have their supersensuous uses. The chemist with his solvents, precipitants, crystallizations, attractions, and repulsions, and the natural philosopher with his statics and dynamics and his correlation of forces, have enlarged our powers of expression. The strata of the geologist furnish useful symbols. What a significant symbol is afforded by the wave! There is much in life, in history, and in all nature that is typified by it. We have cold waves and hot waves, and in the spring and fall migrations

of the birds we have "bird waves." Earthquake shocks go in waves and circles; how often our views and conceptions of things are expressed by the circle! It is a symbol of most profound meaning. It helps us to understand how the universe is finally inexplicable; that there is neither beginning nor end, and that it retreats forever into itself.

We speak of currents of thought, of opinion, of influence, and of tides in the affairs of men. We can conceive of these things under no better figure. Fire and all that pertains to it give us symbols, as heat, light, flame, sparks, smoke.

The words juicy, unctuous, fluid, have obvious appropriateness when applied to the mind and its products. Running water gives us the delightful epithets limpid and lucid. Youth is plastic, ductile, impressible — neither the mind nor the body has yet hardened. The analogy is vital. A habit gets deeper and deeper hold of us; we fall into a rut — these figures convey the exact truth.

When used as a symbol how expressive is the dawn, the twilight, the sunset! The likeness is not accidental but fundamental.

The calm that comes after the storm in human life as in nature — how true the analogy. To give vent to things, how significant. To give vent to angry feelings in words, how like giving vent to smothered fire; or to any suppressed and confined force: the words come faster and hotter, the passion

of anger mounts and there is a "blow out" indeed. Deny yourself the first word, and the conflagration is avoided. A passion can be smothered as literally as a fire.

The use of metaphor, comparison, analogy is twofold — to enliven and to convince; to illustrate and enforce an accepted truth, and to press home and clinch one in dispute. An apt figure will put a new face upon an old and much worn truism, and a vital analogy may reach and move the reason. Thus when Renan, referring to the decay of the old religious beliefs, says that people are no poorer for being robbed of false bank notes and bogus shares, his comparison has a logical validity, — as has also Herbert Spencer's figure when he says, "The illusion that great men and great events came oftener in early times than now is partly due to historical perspective. As in a range of equidistant columns the farthest off look the closest, so the conspicuous objects of the past seem more thickly clustered the more remote they are." We seem to see the identity of law in both these cases. We are treated to a pictorial argument.

We are using analogy in a legitimate and forceful way when we speak of our fund or capital of bodily health and strength, and of squandering or impairing it, or of investing it poorly.

The accidental analogies or likenesses are limitless and are the great stock in trade of most writers

and speakers. They tickle the fancy and enliven the page or the discourse. But essential analogies, or those that spring from unity of law, are more rare. These have the force of logic; they shed a steady light.

St. Paul's famous comparison of the body dead and buried with the seed in the soil, which, he says, dies before it can grow, is used with logical intent. But will it bear examination? Is the germinating seed dead in any sense that the body is dead? It is no more dead than the egg buried beneath the mother hen is dead. When the egg really dies we know the result, as we know the result when the corn rots in the ground. It is not dissolution that the seed experiences, but evolution. The illustration of the eloquent apostle may captivate the fancy, but as argument designed to convince the understanding it has no force.

There might be force in the argument for immortality drawn from the metamorphosis of the grub into the butterfly, if the chrysalis really were a shroud and held a dead body. But it is not, any more than an egg is; it is quick, and capable of movement. The analogy between it and the dead body will not hold. A much more sound analogy, based upon the chrysalis, is that which takes it as the type of a mind or soul undeveloped, — slumbering, gestating, — and the winged creature as the developed, emancipated mind.

Analogy means an agreement of relations or an equality of ratios.

When we speak of the body as a tenement and the soul as the tenant, we mean or aver that the relation of the soul to the body is the same as that of the man to the house he occupies. In either case the occupant can move out or in, and is entirely distinct from the structure that shelters him. But if we know anything about the relations of the mind and the body, we know that they are not like this; we know that they are not truthfully expressed in this comparison.

Bishop Butler's "analogy from nature," upon which he built his famous work, will not any better bear close examination. What analogy is there between death and sleep or a swoon? what agreement of ratios? The resemblance is entirely superficial. Or how can we predict another sphere of existence for man because another sphere awaits the unborn infant? But another sphere does not await the unborn infant; only new and different relations to the same physical sphere. An embryo implies a future; but what is there embryonic about the mature man?

This breakdown of Butler's argument in regard to a future life was pointed out by Matthew Arnold; the very point in dispute, namely, a future life, is assumed. If there is a future life, if there is another world, it doubtless bears some analogy to this. In like manner, if there are fairies and nymphs and

demigods, it is not improbable to suppose that they bear some resemblance to human beings, but shall we assume their actual existence upon such a probability?

That the unborn child starting as a bit of protoplasmic jelly should become a man, a Napoleon, or a Shakespeare, may be quite as startling a fact as the assumption of a future existence; yet the former is a matter of experience, which lends no color to the truth of the latter. It is not a matter of reason that babes become men, but a matter of observation and experience. Indeed, in Butler's famous argument, the analogy of nature is everywhere forced and falsified. In every case he puts the words into her mouth that he would have her speak. His faith supplies him with the belief in a future life, and in a moral governor of the universe, and then he seeks to confirm or to demonstrate the truth of this faith by an appeal to the analogy of nature.

Out of this whirling, seething, bubbling universe of warring and clashing forces man has emerged. How impossible it all seems to reason! Experience alone tells us that it is true. Upon the past history of the earth and of the race of man we may predict astonishing changes and transformations for the future of both, because the continuity of cause and effect is not broken; but the perpetuity of the "me" and the "you" is not implied. All that is implied is the perpetuity of the sum of physical forces. But

as to the future of the individual, standing upon the past or upon the present, what are we safe in affirming? Only this — that as we had a beginning we shall have an ending; that as yesterday we were not, so to-morrow we shall not be. A man is like the electric spark that glows and crackles for an instant between two dark, silent, inscrutable eternities. The fluid is not lost, but that tiny bolt has come and gone. Darkness and silence before; darkness and silence after. I do not say this is the summing up of the whole question of immortality. I only mean to say that this is where the argument from analogy lands us.

We can argue from the known to the unknown in a restricted way. We do this in life and in science continually. We do not know that the fixed stars have worlds revolving about them; yet the presumption, based upon our own solar system, is that they have. But could we infer other suns, from the existence of our own, were no others visible? Could we predict the future of the earth did we not know its past, or read aright its past did we not know its present state? From an arc we can complete a circle. We can read the big in the little. The motion of a top throws light upon the motion of the earth. An ingenious mind finds types everywhere, but real analogies are not so common.

The likeness of one thing with another may be valid and real, but the likeness of a thought with a

thing is often merely fanciful. We very frequently unconsciously counterfeit external objects and laws in the region of mind and morals. Out of a physical fact or condition we fabricate a mental or spiritual condition or experience to correspond. Thus a current journal takes the fact that the sun obscures but does not put out the light of the moon and the stars, and from it draws the inference that the light of science may dim but cannot blot out the objects of faith It counterfeits this fact and seeks to give it equal force and value in the spiritual realm. The objects of faith may be as real and as unquenchable as the stars, but this is the very point in dispute, and the analogy used assumes the thing to be proved. If the objects of faith are real, then the light of science will not put them out any more than the sun puts out the stars; but the fact that the stars are there, notwithstanding the sunlight, proves nothing with regard to the reality of the objects of faith. The only real analogy that exists in the case is between the darkness and the daylight of the world within and the darkness and the daylight of the world without. Science, or knowledge, is light; ignorance is darkness; there are no other symbols that so fully and exactly express these things. The mind sees, science lets in the light, and the darkness flees.

If there is anything in our inward life and experience that corresponds or is analogous to the night with its stars, it is to be found in that withdrawal

from the noise and bustle of the world into the atmosphere of secluded contemplation. If there are any stars in your firmament, you will find them then. But, after all, how far the stars of religion and philosophy are subjective, or of our own creation, is always a question.

I recently met with the same fallacy in a leading article in one of the magazines. "The fact revealed by the spectroscope," says the writer, "that the physical elements of the earth exist also in the stars, supports the faith that a moral nature like our own inhabits the universe." A tremendous leap — a leap from the physical to the moral. We know that these earth elements are found in the stars by actual observation and experience. We see them as truly as we see the stars themselves; but a moral nature like our own — this is assumed and is not supported at all by analogy. The only legitimate inference from the analogy is, that as our sun has planets and that these planets, or one of them at least, is the abode of life, so these other suns in composition like our own, and governed by laws like our own, have planets revolving around them which are or may be the abode of beings like ourselves. If this "moral nature like our own" pervades our system, then the inference is just that it also pervades the other systems. But to argue from physical elements to moral causes is to throw upon analogy more than it will bear.

ANALOGY — TRUE AND FALSE

Analogy is a kind of rule of three: we must have three terms to find the fourth. We argue from the past to the present and from the present to the future. Things that begin must end. If man's life has been continuous in the past, then we may infer that it will be continuous in the future.

Our earth has a moon; it is reasonable, therefore, to suppose that some of the other planets have moons. It is reasonable to suppose that there are other planets and suns and systems, myriads of them. It may be reasonable to think with Sir Robert Ball that the extinct or dark and burnt-out bodies in the sky exceed in numbers the luminous ones, as the non-luminous bodies exceed the luminous ones upon the earth. No man has seen live steam; when it can be seen it is dead; yet we know that it exists.

We may complete a circle from a small segment of it. If we have two sides of a triangle, we may add the third. To find the value of an unknown quantity, we must have a complete equation and as many equations as we have unknown quantities. We can argue from this life to the future life only after proof that there is a future life.

Professor Drummond was able to show the continuity of natural law in the spiritual world by assuming that a spiritual world which was the counterpart of the physical world actually existed. That Calvinism in its main tenets tallies, or seems to tally, with science is no more proof of the literal

truth of those tenets than the ascribing of human form and features to the man in the moon is proof of the existence of such a man. Our minds, our spirits, are no doubt in a way under the same law as are our bodies, because they are the outcome of our bodies and our bodies are the outcome of material nature; but to base upon that fact the existence of a corresponding world and life after death is to leap beyond the bounds of all possible analogy.

Many of the dogmas of theology have a grain of natural truth in them. This does not prove their truth, as applicable to some hypothetical other world, but as applied to this world. The kingdom of heaven, as the founder of Christianity taught, is not yonder and of to-morrow, but is now and here.

Tolstoi, I think, is guilty of false analogy when, in attempting to get rid of the idea of pleasure as the aim and purpose of art, he makes the comparison with food, and says that pleasure is no more the end in eating than it is in painting, or poetry, or music. The analogy is false because the necessities of our bodies are not to be compared with the luxuries, so to speak, of our minds. We cannot live without food, but we can and do live without art. And yet, do we not eat because the food tastes good? Is not the satisfaction of appetite the prime motive in eating? If dining gave us no pleasure, we should probably soon learn to swallow our food in a highly concentrated form, in capsules, and thus make short

work of it. Nature, of course, conceals her own purpose in the pleasure we take in our food, just as she does in the pleasure of the sexes; but of this purpose we take little thought, except in the latter case how to defeat it. We do not have conscious pleasure in breathing; hence our breathing is involuntary. We do have conscious pleasure in food; hence our elaborate and ingenious cookery — often to the detriment of our bodies. Take away the pleasures of life, the innocent natural pleasure, take away the pleasures of art, and few of us would care for either.

Man is a microcosm, an epitome of the universe, and its laws and processes are repeated dimly or plainly in him. Then there are, of course, real analogies and homologies between different parts of nature, as between fluids and gases, and fluids and solids, between the organic and the inorganic, between the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms.

When we strike the great vital currents or laws, — the law of growth, of decay, of health and disease, of reproduction, of evolution, — we strike the region of true analogy. These laws must be continuous throughout nature. All phases of development must be analogous. The mind grows with the body and is under the same law. Exercise is the same to both. Each has its appetites. Each has its tonics and stimulants. All beginnings are the same; that is, from a germ. Language must have begun in the most rudimentary sounds. Art, we know, began in

the most rude and simple marks and signs; science in the crudest, simplest facts; religion in childish superstition; and so on through the whole scope of human development. Development is always from the simple to the complex.

There is, no doubt, a deep-seated analogy between the growth of the individual and the growth of the state or nation; between revolutions in history, and storms and convulsions in nature.

We speak of the root of the matter; everything really has its root, its obscure beginning, its hidden underground processes.

There are types and suggestions everywhere — fresh fuel checks the fire; the soft stone cuts the steel the fastest; the first big drops of the shower raise the dust.

The analogy between the development of animal life upon the earth and the growth of organized communities seems complete. In the lower forms of life, there is no specialization, or division of functions. The amœba can move, feel, digest, reproduce in every part of its structure; it is not differentiated or specialized; so in the rudest tribes, there is little division of labor. As animal life develops, each part of the body has a function of its own; and as communities develop, extreme specialization takes place. Organic life goes from the simple to the complex, as does progress in human affairs. This is the law of all growth.

When Schopenhauer says "riches are like sea water; the more you drink the thirstier you become," the mind is instantly pleased by the force and aptness of the comparison, and for the moment we look upon riches as something to be avoided. But is the analogy entirely true? Sea water is to be avoided altogether, even a single mouthful of it; but even Schopenhauer defends riches and the pursuit of riches. "People are often reproached for wishing for money above all things, and for loving it more than anything else; but it is natural and even inevitable for people to love that which, like an unwearied Proteus, is always ready to turn itself into whatever object their wandering wishes or manifold desires may for the moment fix upon." Here the comparison will bear a closer scrutiny. Wealth is indeed a Proteus that will take any form your fancy may choose. "Other things are only relatively good," the great pessimist further says; "money alone is absolutely good, because it is not only a concrete satisfaction of one need in particular; it is an abstract satisfaction of all." What, then, becomes of its analogy to sea water, which so mocks and inflames our thirst? Even the resemblance in the one particular that Schopenhauer had in mind is not true. To the great majority of people wealth brings a degree of satisfaction; they give over its pursuit and seek the enjoyment of it. When a man enters into the race for wealth, he is unflagging in

seeking it as long as his cup of life is full; but when the limits of his powers are reached, he begins to lose interest, and the appetite for gold, as for other things, declines.

When the same philosopher says that to measure a man's happiness only by what he gets, and not also by what he expects to get, is as futile as to try to express a fraction which shall have a numerator but no denominator, he uses a figure that conveys the truth much more fully. It may be open to the objection of being too technical, but it expresses a real relation for all that. When you increase your expectations, you increase your denominator; and as most men expect or want more than they have, human happiness is nearly always a fraction — rarely is it a whole number. With many it is a very small fraction indeed. Blessed is he who expects little. The man who expects ten and gets but five is more to be envied than he who expects a thousand and gets but fifty. He is nearer the sum of his wishes. Hence the truth of the old saying that it is our wants that make us poor. When a piece of good fortune that he did not expect comes to a man, his happiness or satisfaction is no longer a fraction; it is more than a unit.

Quintilian says that the early blossom of talent is rarely followed by the fruit of great achievement, but the early works of a man or a youth are just as much fruit as his later ones. There is really no analogy

between the early works of an author and the blossoms of a tree. The dreams, the visions, the aspirations of youth are more like blossoms. Probably no great man has been without them; but how they wither and fall, and how much more sober the aspect which life puts on before any solid achievements can be pointed to! There is usually something more fresh and pristine about the earlier works of a man — more buoyancy, more unction, more of the "fluid and attaching character;" but the ripest wisdom always goes with age.

There are, no doubt, many strict and striking analogies between the mind and the body, their growth and decay, their health and disease, their assimilative, digestive, and reproductive processes.

The mind is only a finer body. It is hardly a figure of speech to speak of wounded feelings, of a wounded spirit. How acute at first, and how surely healing with time. But the scar remains. Then there are real analogies, real parallels, between the mind and outward nature, in the laws of growth and decay, nutrition and reproduction. "The mind of Otho," says Tacitus, "was not, like his body, soft and effeminate." There are minds that are best described by the word masculine, and others by the word feminine. There are dull, sluggish minds, just as there are heavy, sluggish bodies, and the two usually go together. There are dry, lean minds, and there are minds full of unction and juice. We

even use the phrase "mental dyspepsia," but the analogy here implied is probably purely fanciful, though mental dissipation and mental intemperance are no idle words. Some persons acquire the same craze for highly exciting and stimulating mental food that others have for strong drink, or for pepper and other condiments. They lose their taste for simple, natural, healthful things, — for good sound literature, — and crave sensational novels and the Sunday newspapers. Doubtless a large part of the reading of the American people to-day is sheer mental dissipation, and is directed by an abnormal craving for mental excitement. There is degeneration in the physical world, and there is degeneration, strictly so called, in the intellectual world. There are proportion, relation, cause and effect, health and disease, in one as in the other. Logic is but the natural relation of parts as we see them in the organic world. In fact, logic is but health and proportion. The mind cannot fly any more than the body can; it progresses from one fact or consideration to another, step by step, though often, or perhaps generally, we are not conscious of the steps. A large view of truth may be suddenly revealed to the mind, as of a landscape from a hill-top ; but the mind did not fly to the vantage ground ; it reached it by a slow and maybe obscure process.

The world is simpler than we think. The modes

and processes of things widely dissimilar are more likely to be identical than we suspect. There are homologies where we see apparent contradiction. There is but one protoplasm for animal and vegetable. A little more or less heat makes the gaseous, makes the liquid, makes the solid. Lava crystallizes or freezes at a high temperature; water, at a low one; mercury, at a still lower. Charcoal and the diamond are one; the same law of gravitation which makes the cloud float makes the rain fall. The law that spheres a tear spheres a globe. These facts warrant us in looking for real homologies, vital correspondences, in nature. Only such correspondences give logical and scientific value to analogy. If the likeness means identity of law, or is the same principle in another disguise, then it is an instrument of truth. We might expect to find many analogies between air and water, the atmosphere being but a finer ocean; also between ice and water, and between ice and the stratified rocks. If water flows, then will ice flow; if ice bends, then will the rocky strata bend. If cross fertilization is good in the vegetable world, we should expect to find it good in the animal world.

There is thought to be a strict analogy between the succession of plants in different months of the year and the prevalence of different diseases at different seasons. The germ theory of disease gives force to the comparison. The different species of

germs no doubt find some periods of the year more favorable to their development than others.

If on this planet men walk about while trees are rooted to the ground, we may reasonably expect that the same is true — provided that on them there are men and trees — of all other planets. If the law of variation, and the survival of the fittest, are the laws of one species, then they will prove to be the laws of all. The bud is a kind of seed; the fruit is a kind of leaf. High culture has the same effect upon man and animals that it has upon plants, — it lessens the powers of reproduction. The lowest organisms multiply by myriads; the higher barely keep from retrograding. A wild apple is full of seeds; in a choice pippin the seeds are largely abortive. Indeed, all weeds and parasites seem bent on filling the world with their progeny, while the higher forms fall off and tend to extinction. Such agreements and correspondences point to identity of law. The analogy is vital.

In the animal economy there are analogies with outward nature. Thus respiration is a kind of combustion. Life itself is a kind of fire which goes out when it has no fuel to feed upon. The foliage of a tree has functions like those of the lungs of an animal. Darwin has noted the sleep of plants and their diurnal motions. Dr. Holmes had a bold fancy that trees are animals, with their tails in the air and their heads in the ground; but there is nothing in the

trunk and branches of a tree analogous to a tail, though there is a sort of rudimentary intelligence in the root, as Darwin has shown. We use the tree as a symbol of the branching of a family; hence the family tree. But the analogy is not a true one. The branches of a family multiply and diverge when traced backward the same as forward. You had two parents, they had four, these four had eight, and so on. If the human race sprang from one pair, then are its branchings more a kind of network, an endless multiplication of meshes. All the past appears to centre in you, and all the future to spring from you. We get the family tree only by cutting out a fragment of this network.

There is little doubt that certain natural laws pervade alike both mind and matter. The law of evolution is universally operative, and is the key to development in the moral and intellectual world no less than in the physical. We are probably, in all our thoughts and purposes, much more under the dominion of universal natural laws than we suspect. The will reaches but a little way. I have no doubt that the race of man bears a definite relation to the life of the globe, — that is, to its age, its store of vitality; that it will culminate as the vital power of the earth culminates, and decline as it declines. Like man, the earth has had its youth, — its nebulous, fiery, molten youth; then its turbulent, luxuriant, copious, riotous middle period; then its placid,

temperate, ripe later age, when the higher forms emerge upon the scene. The analogy is deep and radical. The vital energy of the globe was once much more rampant and overflowing than it is now; the time will come when the pulse of the planet will be much feebler than it is now. Youth and age, growth and decay, are universal conditions. The heavens themselves shall wax old as doth a garment. Life and death are universal conditions, and to fancy a place where death is not is to fancy one's self entirely outside of this universe and of all possible universes.

Men in communities and assemblages are under laws that do not reach or affect the single individual, just as vast bodies of water respond to attractions and planetary perturbations that do not affect the lesser bodies. Men kindle one another as do firebrands, and beget a collective heat and an enthusiasm that tyrannize over the individual purposes and wills. We say things are in the air, that a spirit is abroad; that is, that influences are at work above the wills and below the consciousness of the people. There are changes or movements in the world and in the communities that seem strictly analogous to drifting; it is as when a ship is carried out of its course by unsuspected currents, or as when arctic explorers, with their faces set northward, are unconsciously carried in the opposite direction by the ice floe beneath them. The spirit of the age, or the time-

spirit, is always at work, and takes us with it, whether we know it or not. For instance, the whole religious world is now drifting away from the old theology, and drifting faster than we suspect. Certain zealots have their faces very strongly set against it, but, like Commodore Parry on the ice floe, they are going south faster than their efforts are carrying them north. Indeed, the whole sentiment of the race is moving into a more genial and temperate theological climate, away from purgatorial fires rather than toward them.

The political sentiment of a country also drifts. That of our own may be said to have been drifting for some time now in the direction of freer commercial intercourse with other nations.

A man's life may stagnate as literally as water may stagnate, and just as motion and direction are the remedy for one, so purpose and activity are the remedy for the other. Movement is the condition of life, anyway. Set the currents going in the air, in the water, in the body, in the mind, in the community, and a healthier condition will follow. Change, diversity, activity, are the prime conditions of life and health everywhere. Persons with doubts and perplexities about life go to work to ameliorate some of its conditions, and their doubts and perplexities vanish — not because their problems are solved, as they think they are, but because their energies have found an outlet, the currents have been set going.

Persons of strong will have few doubts and uncertainties. They do not solve the problems, but they break the spell of their enchantment. Nothing relieves and ventilates the mind like a resolution.

A true work of art is analogous to a living organism. "The essential condition of art creations," says Renan, "is to form a living system every portion of which answers and demands every other. . . . The intimate laws of life, of the development of organic products, and of the toning down of shades must be considered at every step." Works such as certain of Victor Hugo's, which have no organic unity and proportion, are, according to this dictum, monstrosities.

When Matthew Arnold insisted upon it that in all vital prose there is a process of evolution, he enunciated the same principle as did Renan. We all know well that which is organic in books as distinguished from the inorganic, the vital as distinguished from the mechanical. Read the learned address of the president of some local scientific or literary society, and then turn to one of Professor Huxley's trenchant papers. The difference is just that between weapons in an armory and weapons in the hands of trained soldiers. Huxley's will and purpose, or his personality, pervade and vitalize his material and make it his own, while the learned president sustains only an accidental and mechanical relation to what he has to say. Happy is the writer

who can lop off or cut out from his page everything to which he sustains only a secondary and mechanical relation.

The summing up of the matter would then seem to be, that there is an analogy of rhetoric and an analogy of science; a likeness that is momentary and accidental, giving rise to metaphor and parable; and a correspondence that is fundamental, arising from the universality of law.

III

STYLE AND THE MAN

I

THE difference between a precious stone and a common stone is not an essential difference — not a difference of substance, but of arrangement of the particles — the crystallization. In substance charcoal and the diamond are one, but in form and effect how widely they differ. The pearl contains nothing that is not found in the coarsest oyster shell.

Two men have the same thoughts; they use about the same words in expressing them; yet with one the product is real literature, with the other it is a platitude.

The difference is all in the presentation; a finer and more compendious process has gone on in the one case than in the other. The elements are better fused and welded together; they are in some way heightened and intensified. Is not here a clue to what we mean by style? Style transforms common quartz into an Egyptian pebble. We are apt to think of style as something external, that can be put on, something in and of itself. But it is not; it is in the

inmost texture of the substance. Choice words, faultless rhetoric, polished periods, are only the accidents of style. Indeed, perfect workmanship is one thing ; style, as the great writers have it, is quite another. It may, and often does, go with faulty workmanship. It is the use of words in a fresh and vital way, so as to give us a vivid sense of a new spiritual force and personality. In the best work the style is found and hidden in the matter.

If a writer does not bring a new thought, he must at least bring a new quality, — he must give a fresh, new flavor to the old thoughts. Style or quality will keep a man's work alive whose thought is essentially commonplace, as is the case with Addison; and Arnold justly observes of the poet Gray that his gift of style doubles his force and "raises him to a rank beyond what his natural richness and power seem to warrant."

There is the correct, conventional, respectable and scholarly use of language of the mass of writers, and there is the fresh, stimulating, quickening use of it of the man of genius. How apt and racy and telling is often the language of unlettered persons; the born writer carries this same gift into a higher sphere. There is a passage in one of Emerson's early letters, written when he was but twenty-four, and given by Mr. Cabot in his Memoir, which shows how clearly at that age Emerson discerned the secret of good writing and good preaching.

"I preach half of every Sunday. When I attended church on the other half of a Sunday, and the image in the pulpit was all of clay, and not of tunable metal, I said to myself that if men would avoid that general language and general manner in which they strive to hide all that is peculiar, and would say only what is uppermost in their own minds, after their own individual manner, every man would be interesting. . . . But whatever properties a man of narrow intellect feels to be peculiar he studiously hides; he is ashamed or afraid of himself, and all his communications to men are unskillful plagiarisms from the common stock of thought and knowledge, and he is of course flat and tiresome."

The great mass of the writing and sermonizing of any age is of the kind here indicated; it is the result of the machinery of culture and of books and the schools put into successful operation. But now and then a man appears whose writing is vital; his page may be homely, but it is alive; it is full of personal magnetism. The writer does not merely give us what he thinks or knows; he gives us himself. There is nothing secondary or artificial between himself and his reader. It is books of this kind that mankind does not willingly let die. Some minds are like an open fire, — how direct and instant our communication with them; how they interest us; there are no screens or disguises; we see and feel the vital play of their thought; we are face to face with their

spirits. Indeed all good literature, whether poetry or prose, is the open fire; there is directness, reality, charm; we get something at first-hand that warms and stimulates.

In literature proper our interest, I think, is always in the writer himself, — his quality, his personality, his point of view. We may fancy that we care only for the subject-matter; but the born writer makes any subject interesting to us by his treatment of it or by the personal element he infuses into it. When our concern is primarily with the subject-matter, with the fact or the argument, or with the information conveyed, then we are not dealing with literature in the strict sense. It is not so much what the writer tells us that makes literature, as the way he tells it; or rather, it is the degree in which he imparts to it some rare personal quality or charm that is the gift of his own spirit, something which cannot be detached from the work itself, and which is as inherent as the sheen of a bird's plumage, as the texture of a flower's petal. There is this analogy in nature. The hive bee does not get honey from the flowers; honey is a product of the bee. What she gets from the flowers is mainly sweet water or nectar; this she puts through a process of her own, and to it adds a minute drop of her own secretion, formic acid. It is her special personal contribution that converts the nectar into honey.

In the work of the literary artist, common facts

and experiences are changed and heightened in the same way. Sainte-Beuve, speaking of certain parts of Rousseau's "Confessions," says, "Such pages were, in French literature, the discovery of a new world, a world of sunshine and of freshness, which men had near them without having perceived it." They had not perceived it because they had not had Rousseau's mind to mirror it for them. The sunshine and the freshness were a gift of his spirit. The new world was the old world in a new light. What charmed them was a quality personal to Rousseau. Nature they had always had, but not the Rousseau sensibility to nature. The same may be said of more recent writers upon outdoor themes. Readers fancy that in the works of Thoreau or of Jefferies some new charm or quality of nature is disclosed, that something hidden in field or wood is brought to light. They do not see that what they are in love with is the mind or spirit of the writer himself. Thoreau does not interpret nature, but nature interprets him. The new thing disclosed in bird and flower is simply a new sensibility to these objects in the beholder. In morals and ethics the same thing is true. Let an essayist like Dr. Johnson or Arthur Helps state a principle or an idea and it has a certain value; let an essayist like Ruskin or Emerson or Carlyle state the same principle and it has an entirely different value, makes an entirely different impression, — the qualities of mind and character of these writers are

so different. The reader's relation with them is much more intimate and personal.

It is quality of mind which makes the writings of Burke rank above those of Gladstone, Ruskin's criticism above that of Hamerton, Froude's histories above Freeman's, Renan's "Life of Jesus" above that of Strauss; which makes the pages of Goethe, Coleridge, Lamb, literature in a sense that the works of many able minds are not. These men impart something personal and distinctive to the language they use. They make the words their own. The literary quality is not something put on. It is not of the hand, it is of the mind; it is not of the mind, but of the soul; it is of whatever is most vital and characteristic in the writer. It is confined to no particular manner and to no particular matter. It may be the gift of writers of widely different manners — of Carlyle as well as of Arnold; and in men of similar manners, one may have it and the other may not. It is as subtle as the tone of the voice or the glance of the eye. Quality is the one thing in life that cannot be analyzed, and it is the one thing in art that cannot be imitated. A man's manner may be copied, but his style, his charm, his real value, can only be parodied. In the conscious or unconscious imitations of the major poets by the minor, we get only a suggestion of the manner of the former; their essential quality cannot be reproduced.

English literature is full of imitations of the Greek poets, but that which the Greek poets did not and could not borrow they cannot lend; their quality stays with them. The charm of spoken discourse is largely in the personal quality of the speaker — something intangible to print. When we see the thing in print, we wonder how it could so have charmed or moved us. To convey this charm, this aroma of the man, to the written discourse is the triumph of style. A recent French critic says of Madame de Staël that she had no style; she wrote just as she thought, but without being able to impart to her writing the living quality of her speech. It is not importance of subject-matter that makes a work great, but importance of the subjectivity of the writer, — a great mind, a great soul, a great personality. A work that bears the imprint of these, that is charged with the life and power of these, which it gives forth again under pressure, is alone entitled to high rank.

All pure literature is the revelation of a man. In a work of true literary art the subject-matter has been so interpenetrated and vitalized by the spirit or personality of the writer, has become so thoroughly identified with it, that the two are one and inseparable, and the style *is* the man. Works in which this blending and identification, through emotion or imagination, of the author with his subject has not taken place, or has taken place imperfectly,

do not belong to pure literature. They may serve a useful purpose; but all *useful* purposes, in the strict sense, are foreign to those of art, which means foreign to the spirit that would live in the whole, that would live in the years and not in the days, in time and not in the hour. The true literary artist gives you of the substance of his mind; not merely his thought or his philosophy, but something more intimate and personal than that. It is not a tangible object passed from his hand to yours; it is much more like a transfusion of blood from his veins to yours. Montaigne gives us Montaigne, — the most delightfully garrulous man in literature. "These are fancies of my own," he says, "by which I do not pretend to discover things, but to lay open myself." "Cut these sentences," says Emerson, "and they bleed." Matthew Arnold denied that Emerson was a great writer; but we cannot account for the charm and influence of his works, it seems to me, on any other theory than that he has at least this mark of the great writer: he gives his reader of his own substance, he saturates his page with the high and rare quality of his own spirit. Everything he published has a distinct literary value, as distinguished from its moral or religious value. The same may be said of Arnold himself: else we should not care much for him. It is a particular and interesting type of man that speaks and breathes in every sentence; his style is vital in his matter, and is no more sepa-

rable from it than the style of silver or of gold is separable from those metals.

In such a writer as Lecky on the other hand, or as Mill or Spencer, one does not get this same subtle individual flavor; the work is more external, more the product of certain special faculties, as the reason, the memory, the understanding; and the personality of the author is not so intimately involved. But in the writer with the creative touch, whether he be poet, novelist, historian, critic, essayist, the chief factor in the product is always his own personality.

Style, then, in the sense in which I am here using the term, implies that vital, intimate, personal relation of the man to his language by which he makes the words his own, fills them with his own quality, and gives the reader that lively sense of being in direct communication with a living, breathing, mental and spiritual force. The writer who appears to wield his language as an instrument or a tool, something exterior to himself, who makes you conscious of his vocabulary, or whose words are the garments and not the tissue of his thought, has not style in this sense. "Style," says Schopenhauer, "is the physiognomy of the mind, and a safer index to character than the face." This definition is as good as any, and better than most, because it implies that identification of words with thoughts, of the man with his subject, which is the secret of a living style.

Hence the man who imitates another wears a mask, as does the man who writes in a language to which he was not born.

II

It has been said that novel-writing is a much finer art in our day than it was in the time of Scott, or of Dickens and Thackeray, — finer, I think, because it is in the hands of finer-strung, more daintily equipped men; but would one dare to say it is a greater art? One may admit all that is charged about Scott's want of style, his diffuseness and cumbrousness, and his tedious descriptions, and still justly claim for him the highest literary honors. He was a great nature, as Goethe said, and we come into vital contact with that great nature in his romances. He was not deficient in the larger art that knows how to make a bygone age live again to the imagination. He himself seems to have deprecated his "big bow-wow" style in comparison with the exquisite touches of Jane Austen. But no fineness of workmanship, no deftness of handling, can make up for the want of a large, rich, copious human endowment. I think we need to remember this when we compare unfavorably such men as Dickens and Thackeray with the cleverer artists of our own day. Scott makes up to us for his deficiencies in the matter of style by the surpassing human interest of his characters and incidents, their relations to the major currents

of human life. His scenes fill the stage of history, his personages seem adequate to great events, and the whole story has a certain historic grandeur and impressiveness. There is no mistaking a great force, a great body, in literature any more than there is in the physical world; in Scott we have come upon a great river, a great lake, a great mountain, and we are more impressed by it than by the lesser bodies, though they have many more graces and prettinesses.

Frederic Harrison, in a recent address on style, is cautious in recommending the young writer to take thought of his style. Let him rather take thought of what he has to say; in turning his ideal values into the coin of current speech he will have an exercise in style. If he has no ideal values, then is literature barred to him. Let him cultivate his sensibilities; make himself, if possible, more quickly responsive to life and nature about him; let him try to see more clearly and feel more keenly, and connect his vocabulary with his most radical and spontaneous self. Style can never come from the outside, — from consciously seeking it by imitating the manner of favorite authors. It comes, if at all, like the bloom upon fruit, or the glow of health upon the cheek, from an inner essential harmony and felicity.

In a well-known passage Macaulay tells what happened to Miss Burney when she began to think

about her style, and fell to imitating Dr. Johnson; how she lost the "charming vivacity" and "perfectly natural unconsciousness of manner" of her youthful writings, and became modish and affected. She threw away her own style, which was a "tolerably good one," and which might "have been improved into a very good one," and adopted "a style in which she could attain excellence only by achieving an almost miraculous victory over nature and over habit. She could cease to be Fanny Burney; it was not so easy to become Samuel Johnson."

It is giving too much thought to style in the more external and verbal aspects of it, which I am here considering, that leads to the confounding of style with diction, and that gives rise to the "stylist." The stylist shows you what can be done with mere words. He is the foliage plant of the literary flower garden. An English college professor has recently exploited him in a highly wrought essay on Style. Says our professor, "The business of letters is twofold, to find words for meaning and to find meaning for words." It strikes me that the last half of this proposition is not true of the serious writer, of the man who has something to say, but is true only of what is called the stylist, the man who has been so often described as one having nothing to say, which he says extremely well. The stylist's main effort is a verbal one, to find meaning for words; he does not wrestle with ideas, but with terms and phrases;

his thoughts are word-begotten and are often as unsubstantial as spectres and shadows.

The stylist cultivates words as the florist cultivates flowers, and a new adjective or a new collocation of terms is to him what a new chrysanthemum or a new pansy is to his brother of the forcing house. He is more an European product than an American. London and Paris abound in men who cultivate the art of expression for its own sake, who study how to combine words so as to tickle the verbal sense without much reference to the value of the idea expressed. Club and university life, excessive library culture — a sort of indoor or hothouse literary atmosphere — foster this sort of thing.

French literature can probably show more stylists than English, but the later school of British writers is not far behind in the matter of studied expression. Professor Raleigh, from whose work on style I quoted above, often writes forcibly and suggestively; but one cannot help but feel, on finishing his little volume, that it is more the work of a stylist than of a thinker. This is the opening sentence: "Style, the Latin name for an iron pen, has come to designate the art that handles, with ever fresh vitality and wary alacrity, the fluid elements of speech." Does not one faintly scent the stylist at the start? Later on he says: "In proportion as a phrase is memorable, the words that compose it become mutually adhesive, losing for a time something of their in-

dividual scope, — bringing with them, if they be torn away too quickly, some cumbrous fragments of their recent association." Does not the stylist stand fully confessed here? That he may avoid these "cumbrous fragments" that will stick to words when you suddenly pull them up by the roots, "a sensitive writer is often put to his shifts, and extorts, if he be fortunate, a triumph from the accident of his encumbrance." The lust of expression, the conjuring with mere words, is evident. "He is a poor stylist," says our professor, "who cannot beg half a dozen questions in a single epithet, or state the conclusion he would fain avoid in terms that startle the senses into clamorous revolt."

What it is in one that starts into "clamorous revolt" at such verbal gymnastics as are shown in the following sentences I shall not try to define, but it seems to me it is something real and legitimate. "A slight technical implication, a faint tinge of archaism in the common turn of speech that you employ, and in a moment you have shaken off the mob that scours the rutted highway, and are addressing a select audience of ticket holders with closed doors. A single natural phrase of peasant speech, a direct physical sense given to a word that genteel parlance authorizes readily enough in its metaphorical sense, and at a touch you have blown the roof off the drawing-room of the villa and have set its obscure inhabitants wriggling in the unaccustomed sunshine."

Amiel says of Renan that science was his material rather than his object; his object was style. Yet Renan was not a stylist in the sense in which I am using the word. His main effort was never a verbal one, never an effort to find meaning for words; he was intent upon his subject; his style was vital in his thought, and never took on airs on its own account. You cannot in him separate the artist from the thinker, nor give either the precedence. All writers with whom literature is an art aim at style in the sense that they aim to present their subject in the most effective form, — with clearness, freshness, force. They become stylists when their thoughts wait upon their words, or when their thoughts are word-begotten. Such writers as Gibbon, De Quincey, Macaulay, have studied and elaborate styles, but in each the matter is paramount and the mind finds something solid to rest upon.

"The chief of the incommodities imposed upon the writer," says Professor Raleigh, is "the necessity at all times and at all costs to mean something," or to find meaning for words. This no doubt is a hard task. The trouble begins when one has the words first. To invoke ideas with words is a much more difficult experience than the reverse process. But probably all true writers have something to say before they have the desire to say it, and in proportion as the thought is vital and real is its expression easy.

When I meet the stylist, with his straining for verbal effects, I love to recall this passage from Whitman. "The great poet," he says, "swears to his art, I will not be meddlesome. I will not have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hang in the way between me and the rest, like curtains. I will have nothing hang in the way, not the richest curtains. What I tell I tell for precisely what it is. Let who may, exalt or startle or fascinate or soothe; I will have purpose, as health or heat or snow has, and be as regardless of observation. What I experience or portray shall go from my composition without a shred of my composition. You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me."

This is the same as saying that the great success in writing is to get language out of the way and to put your mind directly to the reader's, so that there be no veil of words between you. If the reader is preoccupied with your words, if they court his attention or cloud his vision, to that extent is the communication imperfect. In some of Swinburne's poems there is often such a din and echo of rhyme and alliteration that it is almost impossible to hear what the man is really saying.

To darken counsel with words is a common occurrence. Words are like lenses, — they must be arranged in just such a way, or they hinder rather than help the vision. When the adjustment is as it should be, the lens itself is invisible; and language in

the hands of the master is as transparent. Some of the more recent British poets affect the archaic, the quaint, the eccentric, in language, so that one's attention is almost entirely occupied with their words. Reading them is like trying to look through a pair of spectacles too old or too young for you, or with lenses of different focus.

But has not style a value in and of itself? As in the case of light, its value is in the revelation it makes. Its value is to conceal itself, to lose itself in the matter. If humility, or self-denial, or any of the virtues becomes conscious of itself and claims credit for its own sake, does it not that moment fall from grace? What incomparable style in the passage I have quoted from Whitman when we come to think of it, but how it effaces itself and is of no account for the sake of the idea it serves! The more a writer's style humbles itself, the more it is exalted. There is nothing true in religion that is not equally true in art. Give yourself entirely. All selfish and secondary ends are of the devil. Our Calvinistic grandfathers, who fancied themselves willing to be damned for the glory of God, illustrate the devotion of the true artist to his ideal. "Consider the lilies of the field, . . . they toil not, neither do they spin." The style of the born poet or artist takes as little thought of itself, and is the spontaneous expression of the same indwelling grace and necessity.

III

I once overheard a lady say to a popular author, "What I most admire about your books is their fine style." "But I never think about my style," was his reply. "I know you don't," said his admirer, "and that is why I like it so much." But we may regard him as thinking about his style, when he fancied himself thinking only about his matter. In his case the style and the matter were one. When he was consciously occupied only with the substance and texture of his thought, he was occupied with his style. Every effort to make the idea flow clear and pure, to give it freshness and fillip, or to seize and embody in words a mental or emotional impression in all its integrity, without blur or confusion, is an effort in style. It is like taking the alloys and impurities out of a metal; the style or beauty of it is improved. The making of iron into steel is a process of purification. When Froude was questioned about his style, he confessed that he had never given any thought to the subject; his aim had been to say what he had to say in the most direct and simple way possible. He was conscious only of trying to see clearly and to speak truly. I suppose this is the case with all first-class minds, in our day at least: the main endeavor is directed toward the matter, and not toward the manner; or rather, it is to make the one identical with the other. In no page of Froude's,

nor in any writer of equal range and seriousness, are we conscious of the style as something apart and that claims our admiration on its own account, as we are in the case of Walter Pater, for example. Such men as Pater are enamored of style itself, and cultivate it for its own sake. They conceive of it as an independent grace and charm that may be imparted to any subject by dint of an effort directed to verbal arrangement and sequence alone.

IV

There is a good deal of wisdom in Voltaire's saying that "all styles are good that are not tiresome." Voltaire's own style certainly has the merit of not tiring. Even in the English translation I never cease to marvel at its grace and buoyancy. In keeping with this dictum is the remark I heard concerning a certain living writer, namely, that he had the best style in literature to-day because one could read fifty pages of his and not know that one was reading at all; it was pure expression — offered no resistance.

This offering no resistance, this ease and limpidity — a getting rid of all friction in the written page — herein certainly lies the secret of much that is winsome in literature. How little friction the mind encounters in Addison, in Lamb, or in the best of our own prose writers; and how much in Meredith, and the later writings of Henry James! Is not friction to be got rid of as far as possible in all departments

of life? One does not want his shoes to pinch, nor his coat to bind, neither does he want to waste any strength on involved sentences, or on cryptic language. Did you ever try to row a boat in water in which lay a sodden fleece of newly fallen snow? I find the reading of certain books like that. Some of Browning's poems impede my mind in that way.

Force of impact — that is another matter; that warms and quickens the mind. Browning's "How they brought the Good News from Ghent" makes the mind hot by its rush and power. There is no mere mechanical friction of elliptical sentences and obscure allusions here.

Yes, the style that does not tire us is better than the style that does. Thus Arnold's style is better than Walter Pater's, because it is easier to follow; it is not so conscious of itself; it is not so obviously studied. Pater studied words; Arnold studied ideas. Pater sacrificed the more familiar democratic traits of language — ease, simplicity, flexibility, transparency — to his passion for the more choice aristocratic features, — the perfumed, the academic, the highly wrought. Again, I find Arnold's style less fatiguing than Lowell's, because it has more current, more continuity of thought, and is freer from *concetti* and mere surface sparkle. I find Swinburne's prose more tiresome than that of any contemporary British critic, because of its inflated polysyllabic character, and his poetry more cloying than that of any

other poet, because of its almost abnormal lilt and facility; it has a pathological fluidity; it seems as though, when he begins to write verse, his whole mental structure is in danger of melting down and running away in mere words. His heat is that of fever; his inspiration borders on delirium.

We never tire of Addison by reason of his style, or of Swift or of Lamb or of our own Irving or Hawthorne or Warner. It is probably as rare to find a French writer whose style tires the reader as it is to find a German whose style does not. As M. Brunetière well says, French literature is a social literature, German is philosophic, and English individualistic. It is the business of the first to be agreeable, of the second to be profound, of the third to be original. Who does not tire of Strauss sooner than of Renan, of Macaulay sooner than of Sainte-Beuve?

A writer with a pronounced, individualistic style — one full of mere mechanical difficulties, like Browning's or Carlyle's — runs great risk of wearying the reader and of being left behind. So far as his style degenerates into mannerism, so far is he handicapped in the race. Smoothness is not beauty, neither is roughness power; yet without a certain harmony and continuity there is neither beauty nor power. Herbert Spencer, in his essay on the Philosophy of Style, would have a writer avoid this danger of wearying his reader, by writing alternately in different styles. "To have a specific style," he says,

"is to be poor in speech." "The perfect writer will express himself as Junius, when in the Junius frame of mind; when he feels as Lamb felt, will use a like familiar speech; and will fall into the ruggedness of Carlyle when in a Carlylean mood." A man who should try to follow this advice would be pretty sure to be Jack-of-all-styles and master of none. What a piece of patchwork his composition would be! A "specific style" is not to be avoided; it is to be cultivated and practiced till every false note, every trace of crudeness and insincerity, is purged out of it.

The secret of good prose is a subtle quality or flavor, hard to define, like that of a good apple or a good melon, and it is as intimately bound up in the very substance and texture in the one case as in the other, and, we may add, is of as many varieties. We are sure always to get good prose from Mr. Howells and Colonel Higginson, but we are not always so sure of getting it from certain of our younger novelists.

Here is a sample of bad prose from a popular novel by a Southern writer: —

"The whole woods emerged from the divine bath of nature with the coolness, the freshness, the immortal purity of Diana united to the roseate glow and mortal tenderness of Venus, and haunted by two spirits: the chaste, unfading youth of Endymion and the dust-born warmth and eagerness of Dionysus."

Yet the man who could permit himself the use of such inflated language as that, was capable of turning off such a passage as this: —

"Some women, in marrying, demand all and give all: with good men they are happy; with base men they are the broken-hearted. Some demand everything and give little: with weak men they are tyrants; with strong men they are the divorced. Some demand little and give all: with congenial souls they are already in heaven; with uncongenial they are soon in their graves. Some give little and demand little: they are the heartless, and they bring neither the joy of life nor the peace of death."

That is sound prose; it is like a passage from a great classic.

When we advise the young writer to go honestly to work to say in the simplest manner what he really thinks and feels, one does not mean that by this course he is likely to write like the great prose masters, but that by this means alone can his work have the basic qualities of good literature, — directness, veracity, vitality, the beauty and reality of natural things. Genuineness first, grace and eloquence afterwards.

"The ugliest living face," says Schopenhauer, "is better than a mask." It is real, it is alive. So the simple, direct speech of a man in earnest is so much better than the perfunctory eloquence one is so often compelled to hear or to read. Real-

ity, reality — nothing can make up for a want of reality.

Sainte-Beuve said, as I have already quoted, that the peasant always has style; the French peasant probably more often than any other. This is certainly so if we take such a character as Joan of Arc as a typical peasant. What adroitness, and at times, classic beauty in her answer to her judges! When they sought to entrap her with the question, "Do you know if you are in the grace of God?" she replied, "If I am not, may God place me there; if I am, may God so keep me." Under pressure, the peasant mind, and indeed all other minds, are, at times, capable of these things. But usually the charm of rustic speech is in its plainness and simplicity, like that of other rural things, a bridge, a woodshed, a well-sweep, a log house, — no thought of style, thought of service only. But the beauty of what may be called the architectural style of the great prose masters, — Gibbon, Burke, Browne, Hooker, De Quincey, — like the beauty of a Greek temple or a Gothic cathedral, is quite another matter. What both have in common is the beauty of sincerity and reality.

The vernacular style of writers of the seventeenth century, like Walton, Fuller, Baxter, Jonson, is more in keeping with the taste of to-day than the rhetorical and highly wrought style of certain of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century writers.

Hence, when we ascribe style to simple, homely things, or to speech, we mean something quite different from style when applied to the great compositions either in literature, music, or architecture.

Milton could plan and build the lofty rhyme and attain beauty; Wordsworth attains beauty by his sincerity and simplicity, and his fervent love of rural things. He has not style in the Miltonic sense. One has classic beauty, the other, natural or naïve beauty. The monumental works of the ancients were planned and wrought like their architecture, and have a beauty that rivals nature. Shakespeare rarely attains anything like classic beauty; and has any poem since Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" struck the note firmly and surely?

V

I have often asked myself why it is that the interviewer will sometimes get so much more wisdom out of a man, and so many more fresh and entertaining statements — in short, so much better literature — than the man can get out of himself. Is it because one's best and ripest thoughts rise to the surface, like the cream on the milk, and does the interviewer simply skim them off? Maybe, in writing, we often dip too deep, make too great an effort. Interviews are nearly always interesting, — much more so than a formal studied statement by the interviewed himself. Many a piece of sound, excellent

literature has been got out of a man who had no skill at all with the pen. His spoken word is vital and real; but in a conscious literary effort the fire is quenched at once. Hence the charm of letters, of diaries, of the simple narrations and recitals of pioneers, farmers, workers, or persons who have no conscious literary equipment. Who would not rather read a bit of real experience of a soldier in battle, such as a clever interviewer could draw out of him, than to read his general's studied account of the same engagement? "To elaborate is of no avail," says Whitman. "Learned and unlearned feel that it is so." Only the great artist can rival or surpass the sense of reality we often find in common speech. Set a man to writing out his views or his experience and the danger is that he will be too formal; he will get himself up for the occasion; there will be no ease or indifference in his manner; he will go to delving in his mind, and we shall miss the simple, direct self-expression that we are after.

In Dr. Johnson's talk, as reported by Boswell, we touch the real man; in the "Rambler" you touch only his clothes or his periwig. His more formal writing seems the product of some kind of artificial put-on faculty, like the Sunday sermons one hears or the newspaper editorials one reads. The sermon is in what may be called the surpliced style, the Rambler in the periwigged style. Emerson said of Alcott that his conversation was wonderful, but that

when he sat down to write his inspiration left him. Most men are wiser in company than in the study. What is interesting in a man is what he himself has felt or seen or experienced. If you can tell us that, we shall listen eagerly. The uncultured man does not know this, but seeks the far-off or the deep down.

Our thoughts, our opinions, are like apples on the tree: they must take time to ripen; and when they are ripe, how easily they fall! A mere nudge brings them down. How easily the old man talks; how full he is of wisdom! Time was when his tongue was tied; he could not express himself; his thoughts were half formed and unripe; they clung tightly to the bough. Set him to writing, and with great labor he produced some crude, half-formed notions of his own, mixed with the riper opinions of the authors he had read. But now his fruit has matured and it has mellowed; it has color and flavor; and his conversation abounds in wisdom.

VI

The standard of style of the last century was more aristocratic than is the standard of to-day. The important words with Hume, Blair, Johnson, Bolingbroke, as applied to style, were elegance, harmony, ornament; and the chief of these was elegance: the composition must make the impression of elegance, as to-day we demand the impression of the vital and

the real. Even the homely is more suited to the genius of democracy than is the elegant. Perhaps the word is distasteful to modern ears from its conventional associations or its appropriation by milliners and dressmakers. One would not care to write *in*-elegantly, but would rather his page did not suggest the word at all, as he would have his home or his dress suggest the quieter, humbler, more serviceable virtues. In the old story of Bruce's saying, the style may be said to be homely. "I doubt I have killed the comyn." "Ye doubt?" replies Kirkpatrick; "I mak siccar." Hume puts this into elegant language in this wise: "Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick, one of Bruce's friends, asking him soon after if the traitor was slain, 'I believe so,' replied Bruce. 'And is that a matter,' cried Kirkpatrick, 'to be left to conjecture? I will secure him.'" This is polite prose, dressed-up prose, but its charm for us is gone.

VII

There are as many styles as there are moods and tempers in men. Words may be used so as to give us a sense of vigor, a sense of freshness, a sense of the choice and scholarly, or of the dainty and exclusive, or of the polished and elaborate, or of heat or cold, or of any other quality known to life. Every work of genius has its own physiognomy — sad, cheerful, frowning, yearning, determined, meditative. This book has the face of a saint; that of a scholar

or a seer. Here is the feminine, there the masculine face. One has the clerical face, one the judicial. Each appeals to us according to our temperaments and mental predilections. Who shall say which style is the best? What can be better than the style of Huxley for his purpose, — sentences level and straight like a hurled lance; or than Emerson's for his purpose, — electric sparks, the sudden, unexpected epithet or tense, audacious phrase, that gives the mind a wholesome shock; or than Gibbon's for his purpose, — a style like solid masonry, every sentence cut four square, and his work, as Carlyle said to Emerson, a splendid bridge, connecting the ancient world with the modern; or than De Quincey's for his purpose, — a discursive, roundabout style, herding his thoughts as a collie dog herds sheep; or than Arnold's for his academic spirit, — a style like cut glass; or than Whitman's for his continental spirit, — the processional, panoramic style that gives the sense of mass and multitude? Certain things we may demand of every man's style, — that it shall do its work, that it shall touch the quick. To be colorless like Arnold is good, and to have color like Ruskin is good; to be lofty and austere like the old Latin and Greek authors is good, and to be playful and discursive like Dr. Holmes is good; to be condensed and epigrammatic like Bacon pleases, and to be flowing and copious like Macaulay pleases. Within certain limits the manner that is

native to the man, the style that is a part of himself, is what wears best. What we do not want in any style is hardness, glitter, tumidity, superfetation, unreality.

In treating of nature or outdoor themes, let the style have limpidness, sweetness, freshness; in criticism let it have dignity, lucidity, penetration; in history let it have mass, sweep, comprehension; in all things let it have vitality, sincerity, and genuineness.

IV

CRITICISM AND THE MAN

I

IT looks as though we were never to get to the end of the discussion about criticism — its scope, aims, functions, any more than we are likely to get to the end of the discussion of any real question in philosophy, ethics, or religion.

Is the aim of literary criticism judgment, or interpretation, or analysis, or description? May it not have all these aims? For myself, I am disposed to answer in the affirmative.

I doubt if there will ever be a critical method which all may apply. Every man will have his own method, as truly as he has his own manners. The French critic Schérer inclines to "the method which sets to work to comprehend rather than to class, to explain rather than to judge," or which asks as the first step to possess itself of the author's point of view. This is substantially Pope's dictum that a work is to be read in the spirit in which it was written, and it accords with Heine's saying that the critic is to ask, "What does the artist intend?" This is a part of, but does it sum up, the critical function?

A man's writing upon the works of another takes the form of description and analysis — like the report of a naturalist upon a new species, which Mr. Howells thinks is the main function of criticism; or it may aim chiefly at interpretation, which a recent essayist emphasizes as the latest and highest phase of criticism; or it may aim at a judicial estimate, an authoritative verdict from the rules and standards, which is the more classic and academic phase of criticism.

Each phase is legitimate and leads to valuable results.

Of any considerable artistic work we want a description and an analysis, we want an interpretation and an exposition, and we want an appraisement according to the standard of the best that has been thought and done in the world, — not a comparison with the externals of the accepted models, but with the originality, the spontaneity, the sanity, the inner necessity and consistency of them — the truth to nature and to the laws of the human mind. Is it liberating, vitalizing, cheering? Is it ethically sound? Does it favor large and manly ideals? Does it go along with evolution and progress?

What, for instance, will criticism do with the work of such a man as Whitman, or Ibsen, or Tolstoi? It will describe it and analyze it, and name it as lyric, epic, dramatic, etc.; it will interpret it, or draw out and expound the ideas that lie back of it

and out of which it sprang; it will seek to understand it and to get at the writer's point of view; then it will judge it, try it by its own standards, and seek to estimate the value of these standards as they stand related to the best aims and achievements of the human mind.

We demand of these men what we demand of Browning, Tennyson, Hugo, and every other poet and writer of high claims, — genuineness, sincerity, power, inspiration, and that they awaken in us fresh and vivid currents of ideas and emotions. We shall not quarrel with their methods, or materials, or their form, or formlessness, but they must go to the quick. All our pleasure and profit in great art — painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry — is at last one, a new experience of the beauty and significance of nature and life. We are made to feel these emotions afresh and as if for the first time.

Here are the old eternal elements, — life, nature, the soul, man and woman, all in danger of becoming dull, commonplace, uninteresting to us. But the man with the creative touch gives us a new and lively sense of them, by presenting them to us in new combinations and under new lights. The only new thing added is himself, — the quality or flavor of his own genius.

A complete criticism will not limit itself to description or to interpretation; it will seek to estimate, to bring out the relative or absolute value of

the thing. Mr. Howells in his trenchant little volume on "Criticism and Fiction," says the critic has no more business to trample on a poem, a novel, or an essay that does not please him, than the botanist has to grind a plant under his heel because he does not find it pretty. His business "is to classify and analyze the fruits of the human mind as the naturalist classifies the objects of his study, rather than to praise or blame them."

To classify and analyze the fruits of the human mind is certainly one of the functions of criticism, and only one. The analogy Mr. Howells employs is misleading. We do not sit in judgment on natural specimens and products except as they stand related to human wants and utilities. We compare climates, seasons, soils, landscapes, with reference to racial and individual needs and well-being. If you bring me trees from the woods or stone from the quarry to build my house with, I am bound to sit in judgment upon them. And when my house is built, my neighbors will sit in judgment upon it. Of all artificial things, of all man's works, we are bound to ask, Are they well done? are they what they should be? are they the best of their kind? Shall we not ask these questions of the poem also, of the novel, the essay, the history?

Art has relations to life, and the critic is bound to consider what these relations are in any given work, — how true, how important; he is examining a hu-

man product, not a natural specimen, and is as competent to reject as to accept; he must compare, weigh, appraise, to the best of his ability.

The specimens of natural history are perfect after their kind; the main question with them is, to which kind of species does a given specimen belong? But the poem or the history or the novel is not always perfect after its kind. Their kind is usually obvious at a glance, but their merits or demerits, their relation to the best that has been thought and done in the world, are not so obvious. Hence we praise or blame according as they come up to or fall short of their own ideal. The critic is not so much a botanist naming a new flower, as he is a brother gardener criticising your horticulture, or a brother lawyer criticising your brief. We are all critics in this sense one way or another every day of our lives; we try to get at the real value of whatever is offered us, whether it be lands, houses, goods, friends, stocks, bonds, news, pictures, or books; we criticise the men we deal with and employ in order to find out whom to trust; we must have our wits about us when we go to market or go shopping. The critical habit — sifting, testing, comparing, to get at the true value of things — goes with us through life, or else we come often to grief. The finer the product, or the higher the purpose it serves, the more careful is our investigation.

When we come to literature and art our worldly

practical wisdom does not carry very far. It is not now a question of fact or of material values, but of ideal and æsthetic values; it is a question of truth to nature and to life, and of the largest, most vital truth. The mass of readers have little power of divining the good from the bad, the true from the false, in this field. Not the first best, but the second or third best will draw the multitude.

The literary value of a work is more intangible and elusive, harder to define and bring out, than its scientific or moral or other values. It resides in a certain vitality and genuineness of expression; we have a sense of having come face to face with something real and alive in the man, and not, as is so often the case, with something assumed or put on. There is always an original inherent quality and flavor, as in natural products. The language is not the mere garment of the thought, it is the very texture and substance. In all true literature something more than mind and erudition speak, — a man speaks; a vital personality is imminent, — a Charles Lamb, a Wordsworth, a Carlyle, a Huxley, an Emerson, a Thoreau, a Lowell, — all distinct types of intelligence speaking through character.

Self-expression within certain limits is as important in criticism as in any other form of literature.

The French critic Ferdinand Brunetière says that the truly personal way of seeing and feeling, which is a merit of the poet and the novelist, is a fault in the

critic, because the critical function is mainly a judicial one.

In every man there is the common humanity, a measure of the pure reason which he shares with all; then there are the race traits, the family traits, the bias of his times, the bent given by his training and surroundings, and his own special stamp and make-up, — what we call his idiosyncrasy. All these things will play a part in his view of any matter. His success as a critic is when his humanity, his pure intelligence, furnishes the light which is only colored or refracted by its passage through these elements. But colored and refracted it will be, and it is this coloring and refraction or stamp of the personal equation that gives value and charm to the man's work as literature. Reduce criticism to a science, or eliminate the element of impressionism, and the result is no longer literature. The reason may be convinced, but the emotions are untouched.

The one thing that distinguishes all modern literatures from the works of the ancient or classic period is their more permanent subjectivity, and the piercing lyrical note in them.

Self-expression has been the aim of the modern artist in a much fuller sense than it was with the artists of the pagan world. Our religion is a personal and subjective religion, — the kingdom of heaven is within. Christianity turned the thoughts of men upon themselves. Self-examination, self-

criticism began. Man became conscious of himself, of his sins, and of his shortcomings, and learned to be more interested in the elements of his own character.

There is probably no greater delusion than that under which the critic labors when he thinks he is trying the new work by the standard of the best that has been thought and achieved in the world. He is trying it by his own conception of that standard; so much of it as is vital in his own mind he can apply, and no more. His own individual taste and judgment are, after all, his tests. The standard of the best is not some rule of thumb or of yardstick that every one can apply; only the best can apply the best.

Impressionism, therefore, is at the bottom of all criticism, in whatever field. The impression which the work makes upon your intelligence, your taste, your judgment, is all that you can finally give.

Criticism in France, where the art has been more assiduously cultivated than in any other country, seems divided between judicial critics like Brunetière and impressionist critics like Lemaître. The latter states in terms of his own likes and dislikes what the other aims to state in terms of the impersonal reason. But their conclusions are likely to differ only as their temperaments and innate affinities differ. Brunetière has the more dogmatic mind and the more violent antipathies. He could call Sainte-Beuve a rat, — a verdict that savors more of

political and religious intolerance than of the impartial reason.

Are we not coming more and more to demand that in all literary and artistic productions, the producer be present in his work, not merely as mind, as pure intelligence, but also as a distinct personality, giving a flavor of his own to the principles he utters? Every vital creative work is the revelation of a man as well as of a mind, and this is true in criticism no less than in other forms of literature.

Suppose Brunetière's criticism lacked that which makes it Brunetière's, or Arnold's lacked that which makes it Arnold's, should we long care for it? Eliminate from the works of these men all that is individual, all that in each makes the impression of a new literary force, the accent of personality, and you take from the salt its savor. Dare we say that the most precious thing in literature is the individual and the specific? Is not a platitude a platitude because it lacks just these things? The vague and the general may be had in any quantity, at any time. The distinct and the characteristic are always rare. How many featureless novels, featureless poems, featureless discourses, how much savorless criticism of one kind and another, every community produces! Now and then we catch a distinct personal note, a new, penetrating voice, and this we remember and follow in criticism as readily as in poetry or fiction. Have we not here the secret of the

greater interest we take in signed criticism over unsigned?

The pure, disinterested, impersonal reason is a fine thing to contemplate. Who would flout it or deny it? One might as well throw stones at the sun. But as the pure white light of the sun is broken up into a thousand hues and shades as it comes back to us from the living world, so the light of reason comes to us from literature in a thousand blended tints and colors, or as modified by the varying moods and temperaments of the individual writers. Whether or not we want or have a right to expect this pure white light in criticism, what we get is the light as it is reduced or colored by the critic's personality, — the media of his time, his race, his personal equation. It must render accurately the objects, form and feature; but the hue, the atmosphere, the sentiment of it all, the highest value of it all, will be the contribution of the critic's most private and radical self.

Every eminent writer has his way of looking at things, gives his own coloring to general truths, and it is this that endears him to us. Is the word he speaks *his* word, — is it inevitable, the verdict of his character, the outcome of that which is most vital and characteristic in him? Or is it something he has learned, or the result of fashion, convention, imitation?

See how the old elements of the air, soil, water,

forever recombine under the touch of that mysterious something we call life, and produce new herbage, new flowers, new fruit, new men, new women, — forever and yet never the same. So do the forces of man's spirit recombine with the old facts and truisms, and produce new art and new literature.

II

Is it not equally true that the value of criticism as a guide to the judgment or the taste, teaching us what to admire and what to condemn, is less than its value as an intellectual pleasure and stimulus, its power to awaken ideas? Judgment is good, but inspiration is better. How rarely we make the judgments of the greatest critics our own! We are pleased when they confirm our own, but is not our main interest and profit in what the critic gives us out of himself? We do not, for instance, care very much for Carlyle's literary judgments, but for Carlyle's quality of mind, his flashes of poetic insight, his burden of conscience, his power of portraiture, his heroic moral fibre, we care a great deal. Arnold thought Carlyle's criticism less sound than Johnson's, — more tainted with *engouement*, with passion and appetite, as it probably is; but how much more incentive, how much more quickening power, how much more of the stuff of which life is made, do we get from Carlyle than from Johnson or from Arnold himself!

That the criticism is sound is not enough, — it must also warm and stimulate the mind; and if it do this we shall not trouble ourselves very much about its conclusions. Even M. Brunetière says that there are masterpieces in the history of literature and art whose authors were downright fools, as there are, on the other hand, mediocre works from the hands of men of vast intelligence. Very many readers, I fancy, will not rest in the main conclusions at which Tolstoi arrives in his recent discussion of the question "What is art?" but who can fail to feel that here is a large, sincere, helpful soul, whose conception of life and of art is of great value? If we were to estimate Ruskin by the soundness of his judgments alone, we should miss the most important part of him. It is as a prophet of life as well as a critic of art that we value him. Would he be a better critic were he less a prophet?

Or take a more purely critical mind, such as Matthew Arnold's. Do we care very much even for his literary judgments? Do we not care much more for his qualities as a writer, — his lucidity, his centrality, his style, his continuity of thought, his turns of expression, his particular interpretation of literature and life? His opinions may be sound, but this is not the secret of his power; it resides in something more intimate and personal to himself. The late Principal Shairp was probably as sound a critic as was Arnold, but his work is of much less interest,

because it does not contain the same vital expression of a new and distinct type of mind. Arnold was a better critic of literature than of life and history. There were other values than literary ones that were not so clearly within his range. In 1870 he thought the Germans would stand a poor chance in the war with France. How could the German *Gemeinheit*, or commonness, stand up before the French *esprit?* In our civil war, he expected the South to win. Did not the South have distinction? But distinction counts for more in style than in war. Arnold's criticism has the great merit of being a clear and forcible expression of a fine-bred, high-toned, particular type of man, and that type a pure and noble one. There was no bungling, no crudeness, no straining, no confusion, no snap judgment, and apparently no bias. He was as steady as a clock. His ideas were continuous and homogeneous; they run like living currents all through his works, and give them unity and definitiveness. He is not to be effaced or overthrown; he is only to be matched and appraised. His word is not final, but it is fit and challenges your common sense. His contribution flows into the current of English criticism like a clear stream into a turbid one; it is not deep, but pellucid, — a tributary that improves the quality of the whole. It gives us that refreshment and satisfaction that we always get from the words of a man who speaks in his own right and from ample grounds of personal conviction.

Positive judgments in literature or in art, or in any matters of taste, are dangerous things. The crying want always is for new, fresh power to break up the old verdicts and opinions, and set all afloat again. "We must learn under the master how to destroy him." The great critic gives us courage to reverse his judgments. Dr. Johnson said that Dryden was the writer who first taught us to determine the merit of composition upon principle; but criticism has been just as much at variance with itself since Dryden's time as it was before. It is an art, and not a science, — one of the forms of literary art, wherein, as in all other forms of art, the man, and not the principle, is the chief factor.

III

When one thinks of it, how diverse and contradictory have been the judgments of even the best critics! Behold how Macaulay's verdicts differ from Carlyle's, Carlyle's from Arnold's, Arnold's from Frederic Harrison's or Morley's or Stephen's or Swinburne's; how Taine and Sainte-Beuve diverge upon Balzac; how Renan and Arnold diverge upon Hugo; how Lowell and Emerson diverge upon Whitman; and how wide apart are contemporary critics about the merits of Browning, Ibsen, Tolstoi. Landor could not tolerate Dante, and even the great Goethe told Eckermann that Dante was one of the authors he was forbidden to read. In Byron's judg-

ment, Griffiths and Rogers were greater poets than Wordsworth and Coleridge. The German Professor Grimm sees in Goethe "the greatest poet of all times and all people," which makes Matthew Arnold smile. Chateaubriand considered Racine as much superior to Shakespeare as the Apollo Belvidere is superior to an uncouth Egyptian statue. Every nation, says a French critic, has its chords of sensibility that are utterly incomprehensible to another. "Many and diverse," says Arnold, "must be the judgments passed upon every great poet, upon every considerable writer." And it seems that the greater the writer or poet, the more diverse and contradictory will be the judgments upon him. The small men are easily disposed of, — there is no dispute about them; but the great ones baffle and try us. It is around their names, as Sainte-Beuve somewhere remarks, that there goes on a perpetual critical tournament.

It would seem that the nearer we are, in point of time, to an event, a man, a book, a work of art, the less likely we are to estimate them rightly, especially if they are out of the usual and involve great questions and points. Such a poet as Dante or Victor Hugo or Whitman, or such a character as Napoleon or Cromwell or John Brown, or such an artist as Angelo or Turner or Millet, will require time to settle his claim. In literature, the men of the highest order, to be understood, must undoubtedly, in a

measure, wait for the growth of the taste of themselves, or until their own ideals have become at home in men's minds. With every great innovation, in whatever field, every year that passes finds our minds better adjusted to it and more keenly alive to its merits. Contemporary criticism is bound to be contradictory. Men take opposite views of current questions; they are too near them to see all their bearings. How different the aspect the slavery question wears at this distance, and the civil war that grew out of it, from the face they wore a generation or two ago! It is only the few great minds that see to-day what the masses will see to-morrow. They occupy a vantage ground of character and principle that is like an eminence in a landscape, commanding a wide view. Sainte-Beuve certainly did injustice to Balzac, and Schérer to Béranger. Theirs were contemporary judgments, and personal antipathy played a large part in them. Sainte-Beuve says that when two good intellects pass totally different judgments on the same author, it is because they are not fixing their thoughts, for the moment, on the same object; they have not the whole of him before their eyes; their view does not take him in entirely. That is just it: we each look for different values; we are more keenly alive to some merits than to others; what one critic misses another sees. We are more or less like chemical elements, that unite eagerly with some of their fellows, and not with others.

The elective affinities are at work everywhere, — where is the critical genius that is a universal solvent? Probably Sainte-Beuve himself comes as near it as anybody who has lived.

IV

It is not truth alone that makes literature; it is truth plus a man. Readers fancy they are interested in the birds and flowers they find in the pages of the poets; but no, it is the poets themselves that they are interested in. There are the same birds and flowers in the fields and woods, — do they care for them? In many of the authors of whom Sainte-Beuve writes I have no interest, but I am always interested in Sainte-Beuve's view of them, in the play of his intelligence and imagination over and around them. After reading his discussion of Cowper, or Fénelon, or Massillon, or Pascal, it is not the flavor of these writers that remains in my mind, but the flavor of the critic himself. I am under his spell, and not that of his subject. Is not this equally true of the criticism of Goethe, or Carlyle, or Macaulay, or Lamb, or Hazlitt, or Coleridge, or any other? The pages of these writers are no more a transparent medium, through which we see the subject as in itself it is, than are those of any other creative artist. Science shows us, or aims to show us, the thing as it is; but art shows it to us tinged by the prismatic rays of the human spirit. Criticism that warms and

interests is perpetual creation, as Sainte-Beuve suggested. It is a constant combination of the subject with the thought of the critic. When Mr. James writes upon Sainte-Beuve we are under his spell; it is Mr. James that absorbs and delights us now. We get the truth about his subject, of course, but it is always in combination with the truth about Mr. James. The same is true when Macaulay writes about Milton, and Carlyle about Burns or Johnson, and Emerson about Montaigne or Plato, and Lowell about Thoreau or Wordsworth, — the critic reveals himself in and through his subject.

We do not demand that Arnold get the real Arnold out of the way and merge himself into general humanity (this he cannot do in any case), but only that he put aside the conscious exterior Arnold, so to speak, — Arnold the supercilious, the contemptuous, the hater of dissent, the teaser of the Philistine. The critic must escape from the local and accidental. We would have Macaulay cease to be a Whig, Johnson cease to be a Tory, Schérer forget his theological training, and Brunetière escape from his Catholic bias.

v

No matter how much truth the critic tells us, if his work does not itself rise to the dignity of good literature, if he does not use language in a vital and imaginative way, we shall not care for him. Liter-

ary and artistic truth is not something that can be seized and repeated indifferently by this man and by that, like the truths of science: it must be reproduced or recreated by the critic; it must be as vital in his page as in that of his author. The truths of science are static; the truths of art are dynamic. If a mediocre mind writes about Shakespeare, the result is mediocre, no matter how much bare truth he tells us.

What, then, do we mean by a great critic? We mean a great mind that finds complete self-expression in and through the works of other men. Arnold found more complete self-expression through literary criticism than through any other channel: hence he is greatest here; his theological and religious criticism shows him to less advantage. Sainte-Beuve tried poetry and fiction, but did not find a complete outlet for his talent till he tried criticism. Not a profound or original mind, but a wonderfully flexible, tolerant, sympathetic, engaging one; a climbing plant, one might say, that needed some support to display itself to the best advantage. We say of the French mind generally that it is more truly a critical mind than the English; it finds in criticism a better field for the display of its special gifts — taste, clearness, brevity, flexibility, judgment — than does the more original and profoundly emotional English. French criticism is rarely profound, but it is always light, apt, graceful, delicate,

lucid, felicitous, — clear sense and good taste marvelously blended.

Criticism in its scientific aspects or as a purely intellectual effort — a search for the exact truth, a sifting of evidence, weighing and comparing data, disentangling testimony, separating the false from the true, as with the lawyer, the doctor, the man of science, the critic of old texts and documents — is one thing. Criticism of literature and art, involving questions of taste, style, poetic and artistic values, is quite another, and demands quite other powers. In the former case it is mainly judicial, dispassionate, impersonal; in the latter case the sympathies and special predilections are more involved. We seek more or less to interpret the imaginative writer, to draw out and emphasize his special quality and stimulus, to fuse him and restate him in other terms; and in doing this we give ourselves more freely. We cannot fully interpret what we do not love, and love has eyes the judgment knows not of. What a man was born to say, what he speaks out of his most radical selfhood, — that the same fate and power in you can alone fully estimate and interpret.

VI

One's search after the truth in subjective matters is more or less a search after one's self, after what is agreeable to one's constitutional bias or innate

partialities. We do not see the thing as it is in itself so much as we see it as it stands related to our individual fragment of existence. The lesson we are slowest to learn and to act upon is the relativity of truth in all these matters, or that it is what we make it. It is a product of the mind, as the apple is of the tree. We get one kind of truth from Renan, another from Taine, still another from Ruskin or Carlyle or Arnold. The quality differs according as the minds or spirits differ whence the truth proceeds. Do we expect all the apples in the orchard to be alike? In general qualities, but not in particular flavors; and in literature it is the particular flavor that is most precious. It is the quality imparted to the truth by the conceiving mind that we prize.

It is a long while before we rise to the perception that opposites are true, that contrary types equally serve. "One supreme does not contradict another supreme," says Whitman, "any more than one eyesight contravenes another eyesight, or one hearing contravenes another hearing." Great men have been radical and great men have been conservative; great men have been orthodox and they have been heterodox; they have been forces of expansion and they have been forces of contraction. In literature, it is good to be a realist, and it is good to be a romanticist; it is good to be a Dumas, and it is good to be a Zola; it is good to be a Carlyle, and it is

good to be a Mazzini, — always provided that one is so from the inside and not from without, from original conviction and not from hearsay or conformity.

A man makes his way in the world amid opposing forces; he becomes something only by overcoming something; there is always a struggle for survival, and always merit in that which survives. Let each be perfect after its kind. We do not object to the Gothic type of mind because it is not the classic, nor to the Englishman because he is not the Frenchman. We look for the measure of nature or natural force and authority in these types. Nature is of all types; she is of to-day as well as of yesterday; she is of this century as well as of the first; she was with Burns as well as with Pindar. Because the Greek was natural, shall we say therefore nature is Greek? She is Asiatic, Icelandic, Saxon, Celtic, American, as well. She is all things to all men; and without her nothing is that is.

VII

Truth is both subjective and objective. The former is what is agreeable to one's constitution and point of view, or mental and spiritual make-up. Objective truth is verifiable truth, or what agrees with outward facts and conditions.

Criticism deals with both aspects. It is objective when it is directed upon objective or verifiable facts; it is subjective when it is directed upon subjective

facts. It is an objective fact, for instance, that such a man as Shakespeare lived in such a country in such a time, that he wrote various plays of such and such a character, and that these plays were founded upon other plays or legends or histories. But the poetic truth, the poetic beauty of these plays, their covert meanings, the philosophy that lies back of them, are not in the same sense objective facts. In these respects no two persons read them just alike. Hamlet has been interpreted in many ways. Which Hamlet is the true one, Goethe's, or Coleridge's, or Hazlitt's, or Kean's, or Booth's? Each is true, so far as it expresses a real and vital conception begotten by the poet upon the critic's or the actor's mind. The beauty of a poem or any work of art is not an objective something patent to all; it is an experience of the mind which we each have in different degrees. In fact, the field of our æsthetic perceptions and enjoyments is no more fixed and definite than is the field of our religious perceptions and enjoyments, and we diverge from one another in the one case as much as in the other. This divergence is of course, in both cases, mainly superficial; it is in form and not in essence. Religions perish, but religion remains. Styles of art pass, but art abides. Go deep enough and we all agree, because human nature is fundamentally the same everywhere. All that I mean to say is that the outward expressions of art differ in different ages and among different

races as much as do the outward expressions of religion. In all these matters the subjective element plays an important part. Is Browning a greater poet than Tennyson? Is Thackeray a greater novelist than Dickens? Has Newman a better style than Arnold? Is Poe our greatest poet, as many British critics think? These and all similar questions involve the personal equation of the critic, and his answer to them will be given more by his unconscious than by his conscious self. The appeal is not so much to his rational faculties as to his secret affinities or his æsthetic perceptions. You can move a man's reason, but you cannot by any similar process change his taste or his faith. If we are not by nature committed to certain views, we are committed to a certain habit of mind, to a certain moral and spiritual attitude, which makes these views almost inevitable to us. "It is not given to all minds," says Sainte-Beuve, "to feel and to relish equally the peculiar beauties and excellences of Massillon," or, it may be added, of any other author, especially if he be of marked individuality.

We do not and cannot all have the same measure of appreciation of Emerson, or Wordsworth, or Ruskin, or Whitman, or Browning. To enjoy these men "sincerely and without weariness is a quality and almost a peculiarity of certain minds, which may serve to define them." Sainte-Beuve himself was chiefly interested in an author's character, — "in

what was most individual in his personality." He had no arbitrary rules, touchstones, or systems, but pressed each new work gently, almost caressingly, till it gave up its characteristic quality and flavor.

But the objective consideration of the merits of a man's work does not and cannot preclude or measure the subjective attraction or repulsion or indifference which we do or do not feel toward that work. Something deeper and more potent than reason is at work here. Back of the most impartial literary judgment lies the fact that the critic is a person; that he is of a certain race, family, temperament, environment; that he is naturally cold or sympathetic, liberal or reactionary, tolerant or intolerant, and therefore has his individual likes and dislikes; that certain types attract him more than others; that, of two poets of equal power, the voice of one moves him more than that of the other. Something as subtle and vital and hard to analyze as the flavor of a fruit, and analogous to it, makes him prefer this poet to that. One may see clearly the superiority of Milton over Wordsworth, and yet cleave to the latter. How beautiful is "Lycidas," yet it left Dr. Johnson cold and critical. There is much more of a cry — a real cry of the heart — in Arnold's "Thyrsis." One feels that the passion is real in one, and assumed in the other. Is "Lycidas" therefore less a creative work? The affirmative side of the question is not without support. Johnson undervalued some of

Gray's best work; the touch of sympathy was lacking. This touch of sympathy does not wait upon the critical judgment, but often underruns and outruns it. It is said that Miss Martineau found "Tom Jones" dull reading, that Charlotte Brontë cared not for Jane Austen, and that Thackeray placed Cooper above Scott, — all, no doubt, from a lack of the quickening touch of sympathy.

As a rule, we have more sympathy with the authors of our own country than with those of another. Few Englishmen can do justice to Victor Hugo, and even to some Frenchmen he is a "gigantic blusterer." It is equally hard for a Frenchman to appreciate Carlyle, and how absurd seems Voltaire's verdict upon Shakespeare, — "a drunken savage"!

The French mind is preeminently a critical mind, yet in France there are and have been as many schools of criticism as of poetry or philosophy or romance. Different types of mind, individual idiosyncrasy, opposing theories and methods, stand out just as clearly in this branch as in any other branch of mental activity. From Madame de Staël down through Barante, Villemain, Nisard, Sainte-Beuve, to Brunetière and the critics of our own day, criticism has been individualistic, and has reflected as many types of mind and points of view as there have been critics. Where shall we look for the final criticism? First it is classicism that rules, then it is romanticism, then naturalism, and next, we are told,

it is to be idealism. Whichever it is, it is true enough when uttered by vital and earnest minds, and serves its purpose. There are many excellences, but where is the supreme excellence? The naturalism of Sainte-Beuve is excellent, the positivism of Nisard is excellent, the classicism of Brunetière is excellent, and the determinism of Taine yields interesting results; but all are relative, all are experimental, all are subject to revision. It is given to no man to have a monopoly of truth. It is given to no poet to have a monopoly of beauty. There is one beauty of Milton, another of Wordsworth, another of Burns, another of Tennyson. To seize upon and draw out the characteristic beauty of each, and give his reader a lively sense of it, is the business of the critic.

VIII

Our reading is a search for the excellent, for the vital and characteristic, which may assume as many and diverse forms in art and literature as it does in life and nature. The savant, the scientist, the moralist, the philosopher, may have pleasure in a work that gives little or no pleasure to the literary artist. Criticism may be looked upon as a search for these various values or various phases of truth, which the critic expresses in terms of his own taste, knowledge, insight, etc., for scientific values, philosophical values, literary and poetic values, or moral and religious values, according to the subject upon

which the critical mind is directed. No two men look for exactly the same values, nor have the same measure of appreciation of them. Emerson and Lowell, for instance, make quite different demands and form different estimates of the poets they read. Lowell lays the emphasis upon the conventional literary values, Emerson more upon spiritual and religious values. An Englishman will find values in the poets of his own country that a Frenchman does not find, and a Frenchman, values in his poets that an Englishman does not find. See how Schérer and Taine handled Milton. Milton's great epic has poetic and literary value, often of a high order, but as philosophy or religion it is grotesque.

IX

Yet let me not seem to underrate the value of what is called judicial criticism. Criticism as an act of judgment, as a disinterested endeavor to see the thing as it is in itself and as it stands related to other things, is justly jealous of our personal tastes and preferences. These tastes and preferences may blind us to the truth. Can we admire above them, or even against them? To cherish no writers but those of our own stripe or mental complexion is the way of the half cultured. Can we rise to a disinterested view? The danger of individualism in letters is caprice, bias, partial views; the danger of intellectualism is the cold, the colorless, the formal.

The ideal critic will blend the two; he will be disinterested and yet sympathetic, individual and yet escape caprice and bias, warm with interest and yet cool with judgment; surrendering himself to his subject and yet not losing himself in it, upholding tradition and yet welcoming new talent, giving the personal equation free play without blurring the light of the impersonal intelligence. From the point of view of intellectualism, criticism seeks to eliminate the personal equation, that which is private and peculiar to us as individuals, and to base criticism upon something like universal principles. What we crave, what our minds literally feed upon, may blind us to the truly excellent. Our *wants* are personal; what we should aim at is an excellence that is impersonal. When we rise to the sphere of the disinterested, we lose sight of our individual tastes and predilections. The question then is, not what we want, not what we have a taste for, but what we are capable of appreciating. Can we appreciate the best? Can we share the universal mind to the extent of delighting in the best that has been known and thought in the world? Emerson said he was always glad to meet people who saw the superiority of Shakespeare to all other poets. If we prefer Pope to Shakespeare, as we are apt to at a certain age, we may know by that that there is an excellence beyond our reach. It is certain that the mass of readers will not appreciate the best literature, but only the second or

third best. A man's æsthetic perceptions may be broadened and educated as well as his intellectual. An unread man feels little interest beyond his own neighborhood, — the personal doings of the men and women he sees and knows. Educate him a little, give him his county paper, and the sphere of his interests is widened; a little more, and he takes an interest in his State; more still, and he broadens out to his whole country; still more, and the whole world is within his sympathy and ken. So in the æsthetic sphere; he gets beyond his personal tastes and wants into the great world currents of literature and art. He can appreciate works written in other ages and lands, and that are quite foreign to his own temperament and outlook. This is to be disinterested. To emancipate the taste is as much as to emancipate the intellect; to rise above one's personal affinities is as much as to rise above one's personal prejudices and superstitions. The boy of a certain stamp has an affinity for the dime novel; if we can lift him to an appreciation of Scott, or Thackeray, or Hawthorne, how have we emancipated his taste! So that Brunetière was right in saying that, in art and literature, the beginning of wisdom is to distrust what we like. *Distrust*, not repudiate. Let us examine first and see upon what grounds we like it, — see if we *ought* to like it; see if it is akin to that which is of permanent value in the world's best thought. A French critic tells a

story of a man who sat cool and unmoved under a sermon that made the people about him shed torrents of tears, and who excused himself by saying, "I do not belong to this parish." One's tastes must be broader than one's parish. I suppose any of our religious brethren would feel a little shy of weeping in the church of a religious denomination not his own. Our religion is no more emancipated than are our tastes. Lowell says there are born Popists and born Wordsworthians; but the more these types can get out of their limitations and appreciate one another, the more they are emancipated.

V

RECENT PHASES OF LITERARY CRITICISM

I

THE criticism of criticism is one of the marked literary characteristics of the last ten or fifteen years, both in this country and in Europe. It is seen in France in Brunetière's essays and in Hennequin's "Scientific Criticism;" in England in the recent work of W. Basil Worsfold on the "Principles of Criticism" and in Mr. John M. Robertson's two volumes of "Essays toward a Critical Method;" in this country in Mr. Howells's "Criticism and Fiction," in Professor Johnson's "Elements of Criticism," and in the still more recent work of Professor Sears on "Methods and Principles of Criticism," besides the numerous discussions of the subject in the magazines and literary journals.

A Western college professor lately discussed some phases of the subject under the head of "Democratic Criticism;" whereupon other college professors raised the voice of protest, one of them asking ironically, Why not have a democratic botany and zoölogy and geology and astronomy? I think it

may be said in reply that, so far as democracy is based upon natural law and means free inquiry, a fair field and no favor, we have these things already. All science is democratic, in the sense that it is no respecter of persons, has no partialities, stops at no arbitrary boundaries, and places all things on an equal footing before natural law. Surely the spirit of science makes directly for democracy. When science shows us that the universe is all made of one stuff, that the celestial laws, as Whitman said, do not need to be worked over and rectified, that inherent power and worth alone finally tell, and that there is not one rule for the heavens above and another for the earth below, it is making smooth the way for democratic ideas and ideals.

Still, pure science is outside the domain of literature, and does not reflect a people's life and character as literature does. It does not hold the mirror of man's imagination up to nature, but resolves nature in the alembic of his understanding. It is not an exponent of personality, as art is, but an index of the development and progress of the impersonal reason. But when we enter the region of the sentiments and the emotions — the subjective world of criticism, literature, art — the case is different. Here we find reflected social and arbitrary distinctions; here we find mirrored the spirit and temper of men as they are acted upon and modified by the social organism and the ideals of different times and races.

A democratic community will have standards of excellence in art and criticism differing from those of an aristocratic community, and will be drawn by different qualities. It seems to me that Dr. Triggs was quite right in saying that a criticism that estimates literary products according to absolute standards, that clings to the past, that cultivates the academic spirit, that is exclusive and unsympathetic, may justly be called aristocratic ; and that a criticism that follows more the comparative method, that adheres to principles instead of to standards, and lays the stress upon the vital and the characteristic in a man's work, rather than upon its form and extrinsic beauty, is essentially democratic.

No doubt the ideal of the monumental works of antiquity is essentially anti-democratic. It was fostered by an exclusive culture. It goes with the idea of the divine right of kings, of a privileged class, and is at war with the spirit of our times. The Catholic tradition in religion and the classical tradition in literature are as foreign to the spirit of democracy as is the monarchical tradition in politics. They are all branches from the same root. The classical tradition begat Milton, but it did not beget Shakespeare, the most marvelous genius of the modern world. To the classic tradition, as it spoke through Voltaire, Shakespeare was a barbarian. Indeed, Shakespeare's art was essentially democratic, how much soever it may have occupied itself with

royal and aristocratic personages. It is as free as an uncaged bird, and pays no tribute to classic models. Its aim is inward movement, fusion, and vitality, rather than outward harmony and proportion. A Greek play is like a Greek temple, — chaste, severe, symmetrical, beautiful. A play of Shakespeare is, as Dr. Johnson long ago suggested, more like a wood or a piece of free nature.

II

Democratic and aristocratic may not be the best terms to apply to the two opposing types of critics, — men like Matthew Arnold or the French critic Ferdinand Brunetière, on the one hand, both the spokesmen of authority in letters; and men like Sainte-Beuve and Anatole France, and the younger generation of English and American critics on the other, men who are more tolerant of individual differences and more inclined to seek the reason of each work within itself. Yet these terms indicate fairly well two profoundly different types.

Brunetière is a militant and dogmatic critic, as we saw by his severe denunciation of Zola while lecturing in this country a few years since. One of his eulogists speaks of him as the "autocrat of triumphant convictions." Of democratic blood in his veins there is very little. He reflects the old orthodox and aristocratic spirit in his dictum that nature is not to be trusted; that both in taste and in morals

what comes natural to us and gives us pleasure is, for that very reason, to be avoided. Nature is depraved. In morals, would we attain to virtue, we must go counter to her; and in art and literature, would we attain to wisdom, we must distrust what we like. This suspicion of nature was the keynote of the old theology, which found its authority in a miraculous revelation, and it is the keynote of the old Aristotelian criticism, which found its authority in a body of rules deduced from the masters. The new theology looks for a scientific basis for its morals, or seeks for the sanction of nature herself; and democratic criticism aims to stand upon the same basis, and cleaves to principles and not to standards, not by yielding to the caprices of uninformed taste, but by seeking the law and test of every work within itself. We no longer judge of the worth of a man by his creed, but by what he is in and of himself; by his natural virtues and aptitudes; and we no longer condemn a work of art because it breaks with the old traditions.

Arnold was of similar temper with Brunetière. His elements of style are "dignity and distinction," a part of the classic tradition, a survival from the feudal and aristocratic world, from a literature of courts and courtiers, as distinguished from a literature of the people, a democratic literature. Distinction of utterance, distinction of manners, distinction of dress and equipage — they are all of a piece, and

adhere in the aristocratic and monarchical ideal. The special antipathy of this ideal is the common all commonness is vulgar. When Arnold came to this country and became interested in the lives of Grant and Lincoln, he found them both wanting in distinction, — there was no savor of the aristocratic in their words or manners. And the criticism is true. From all accounts, Grant presented a far less distinguished appearance at Appomattox than did Lee; and Lincoln was easily outshone in aristocratic graces by some members of his cabinet. Indeed, the predominant quality of the two men was their immense commonness. Washington and Jefferson came much nearer the aristocratic ideal. Lincoln and Grant both had greatness of the first order, but their type was democratic and not aristocratic. The aristocratic ideal of excellence embraces other qualities; there is more pride, more exclusiveness in it; it holds more by traditions and special privileges. Lincoln had less distinction than Sumner or Chase, Grant less than Sherman or Lee, but each had an excellence the others had not. The choice, the refined, the cultured, belong to one class of excellencies: the qualities of Lincoln and Grant belong to another and more fundamental kind. Arnold himself had distinction, — he had urbanity, lucidity, proportion, and many other classic virtues, — but he had not breadth, sympathy, heartiness, commonness. The quality of distinction, an air of some-

thing choice, high-bred, superfine, will doubtless count for less and less in a country like ours. In literature and in character we are looking for other values, for the true, the vital, the characteristic. There is nothing in life or character more winsome than commonness wedded to great excellence; the ordinary crowned with the extraordinary, as in Lincoln the man, Socrates the philosopher, Burns or Wordsworth the poet. Distinction wins admiration, commonness wins love. The note of equality, the democratic note, is much more pronounced in Browning than in Tennyson, in Shelley than in Arnold, in Wordsworth than in Milton, and it is more pronounced in American poets than in English. In times and for a people like ours, the suggestion of something hearty and heroic in letters is more needed than the suggestion of something fine and exquisite. Distinction is not to be confounded with dignity or elevation, which flourishes more or less in all great peoples. A common laboring man may show great dignity, but never distinction. Dignity often shone in the speeches of the old Indian chiefs, but not distinction, as the term is here used.

The more points at which a man touches his fellow man, the more democratic he is. The breadth of his relation to the rest of the world, that is the test. Sainte-Beuve was more truly a democratic critic than is Brunetière. The democratic producer

in literature will differ from the aristocratic less in his standards of excellence than in the atmosphere of human equality and commonness which he effuses. We are too apt to associate the common with the vulgar. There is the commonness of a Lincoln or a Grant, and there is the commonness of the lower strata of society. There is the commonness of earth, air, and water, and there is the commonness of dust and mud; the commonness of the basic and the universal, and the commonness of the cheap and tawdry. Grant's calmness, self-control, tenacity of purpose, modesty, comprehensiveness of mind, were uncommon in degree, not in kind. He was the common soldier with extraordinary powers added, but the common soldier was always visible. So with Lincoln, — his greatness was inclusive, not exclusive.

III

So far as good taste means "good form," and so far as good form is established by social and conventional usages of the fashionable world, the poet of democracy has little to do with it. But so far as it is based upon the inherent fitness of things and the health and development of the best there is in a man, so far is he bound to enlist himself in its service. In a world where everybody is educated and reads books, much poor literature will circulate; but will not the good, the best, circulate also? Will there

not be the few good judges, the saving remnant? Is there not as much good taste and right reason now in England or France as during more rigidly monarchical times?

The ideal democracy is not the triumph of barbarism or the riot of vulgarity, but it is the triumph of right reason and natural equality and inequality. Some things are better than others, better from the point of view of the whole of life. These better things we must cling to and make much of in a democracy, as in an aristocracy. We must aspire to the best that is known and thought in the world. This best a privileged class seeks to appropriate to itself; a democracy seeks to share it with all. All are not capable of receiving it, but all may try. They will be better able to-morrow if they have the chance to-day. We must not ignore the vulgarity, the bad taste incident to democratic conditions. If we do, we never get rid of them. Political equality brings to the foreground many unhandsome human traits, the loud, the mediocre, the insolent, etc. All the more must we fix attention upon the true, the noble, the heroic, the disinterested. The rule of temperance, of good taste, of right reason, antedates any and every social condition. Democracy cannot abrogate fundamental principles. The essential conditions of life are not changed, but arbitrary, accidental conditions are modified. One still needs food and raiment and shelter and transportation; he is still

subject to the old hindrances and discouragements within himself.

We must give the terms good taste, right reason a broader scope; that is all. The principles of good taste when applied to art are not fixed and absolute, like those of mathematics or the exact sciences. They are vital and elastic. They imply a certain fitness and consistency. Shakespeare shocked the classic taste of the French critics. He violated the unities and mixed prose and poetry. But what was good taste in Shakespeare — that is, in keeping with his spirit and aim — might be bad taste in Racine. What is permissible to an elemental poet like Whitman would jar in a refined poet like Longfellow. But bad taste in Whitman, that is, things not in keeping with the ideal he has before him, jar the same as in any other poet. He has many lines and passages and whole poems that set the teeth of many readers on edge, that are yet in perfect keeping with his plan and spirit. They go with the poet of the Cosmos, but not with the poet of the drawing-room or library. My taste is not shocked, but my courage is challenged.

In Whitman's case the appeal is not so directly and exclusively to our æsthetic perceptions as it is in most other poets; he is elemental where they are cultured and artificial; at the same time he can no more escape æsthetic principles than they can. Because a flower, a gem, or a well-kept lawn is beau-

tiful, we are not compelled to deny beauty to rocks, trees, and mountains. If Whitman does not, in his total effects, attain to something like this kind of beauty, he is not a poet.

IV

I have said that Sainte-Beuve was more truly a democratic critic than is M. Brunetière. He is more tolerant of individualism in letters. He called himself a naturalist of minds. His main interest in each work was in what was most individual and characteristic in it. He was inclusive rather than exclusive, less given to positive judgments, but more to sympathetic interpretation. He united the method of Darwin to the sensibility of the artist. Critics like Arnold and Brunetière uphold the classic and academic traditions. They are aristocratic because they are the spokesmen of an exclusive culture. They derive from Catholicism more than from Protestantism; they uphold authority rather than encourage individuality in life and letters. In criticism they aim at that intellectual disinterestedness which is indeed admirable, and which has given the world such noble results, but which seems unsuited to the genius of our time. Ours is a democratic century, a Protestant century. Individualism has been the dominant note in literature. The men of power, for the most part, have not been the disinterested, but the interested men, the men of convic-

tion and of more or less partial views, who have not so much aimed to see the thing as it is in itself as they have aimed to make others see it as they saw it. In other words, they have been preachers, doctrinaires, men bent upon the dissemination of particular ideas.

One has only to run over the list of the foremost names in literature for the past seventy-five years. There is Tolstoi, in Russia, clearly one of the great world writers, but a doctrinaire through and through. There are Renan, Victor Hugo, Taine, Thiers, Guizot, in France; Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, Ruskin, Newman, Huxley, George Eliot, Mrs. Ward, in English literature, and in American literature Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau. All these writers had aims ulterior to those of pure literature. They were not disinterested observers and recorders. They obtruded their personal opinions and convictions. They are the writers with a message. Their thoughts spring from some special bent or experience, and address themselves to some special mood or want. They wrote the books that help us, that often come to us as revelations; works of art, it may be, but of art in subjection to moral conviction, and they are directed to other than purely æsthetic ends. They gave expression to their individual tastes and predilections; they were more or less tethered to their own egos; they may be called the personal authors, as their predecessors may be called the im-

personal. They are not of the pure breed of men of letters, but represent crosses of various kinds, as the cross of the artist with the thinker, the savant, the theologian, the man of science, the reformer, the preacher. These personal authors belong to the modern world rather than to the ancient; to a time of individualism rather than to a time of institutionalism; to an industrial and democratic age, rather than to an imperial and military age.

Modern life is undoubtedly becoming more and more impersonal in the sense that it favors less and less the growth and preservation of great personalities, yet its utilitarian spirit, its tendency to specialization, its right of private judgment, and its religious doubts and unrest, find their outcome in individualism in literature. The disinterested critics and recorders are still among us, but power has departed from them. The age is too serious, the questions are too pressing. The man of genius is no longer at ease in Zion. If he rises at all above the masses, he must share the burden of thought and conscience of his times. This burden may hinder the free artistic play of his powers, as it probably has in most of the writers I have mentioned, yet it will greatly deepen the impression his words will make. The saying "Art for art's sake" cannot be impeached. even by Tolstoi. When rightly understood, it is true. Art would live in the whole, and not in the part called morals or religion, or even beauty. But

its exponents in our day have been, with few exceptions, of a feeble type, men of words and fancies like Swinburne or Poe. In Tennyson we have as pure a specimen of artistic genius as in Shakespeare, but a far less potent one. His power comes when he thrills and vibrates with some special thought or cry of his time. With the great swarms of our minor poets the complaint is, not that the type is not pure, but that the inspiration is feeble. They have more art than nature. It is the same with the novelists. Since Hawthorne and Thackeray the pure artistic gift has no longer been the endowment of great or profound personalities. George Eliot, Mrs. Ward, Tolstoi, all interested writers, all with aims foreign to pure art, are the names of power in our half of the century. Henry James is a much finer artist, but he has nothing like their hold upon the great common elements of human life. The disinterested writer gives us a higher, more unselfish pleasure than the type I am considering; we are compelled to rise more completely out of ourselves to meet him. I am only insisting that in our day he has little penetration, and that the men of power have been of the other class.

I have placed Taine among the interested critics; he was interested in putting through certain ideas; he had a thesis to uphold; he will not value all truths equally, he will take what suits him. Like all men with preconceived ideas, his mind was more

like a searchlight than like a lamp. This makes him stimulating as a critic, but not always satisfying.

The same is true of our own Emerson, probably our most stimulating and fertilizing mind thus far. Lowell, as a man of letters, is of a much purer strain; he is in the direct line of succession of the great literary names, yet the value of his contribution undoubtedly falls far short of that of Emerson. As a poet, Emerson was a poor singer with wonderfully penetrating tones, almost unequaled in this respect. The same may be said of him as a critic; he was a poor critic with a wonderfully penetrating glance. He had the hawk's eye for the game he was looking for; he could see it amid any tangle of woods or thicket of the commonplace. His special limitation is that he was looking for a particular kind of prey. His sympathies were narrow but intense. The elective affinities were very active in his criticism. He loved Emersonian poetry, he loved the Emersonian paradoxes, he valued the wild æolian tones; he delighted in the word that gave the prick and sting of the electric spark; abruptness, surprise, the sudden, intense, forked sentence — these took him, these he dealt in. His survey of any man or matter is never a complete one, never a disinterested one, never done in the scientific spirit. He writes about representative men, and exploits Plato, Goethe, Montaigne, etc., in relation to his thought. He is always on quests for particular ideas, in search for

Emersonian values. He will not do justice to such poets as Poe and Shelley, but he will do more than justice to Donne and Herbert; he finds in them what he sets out to find; it is a partial view, but it is penetrating and valuable; it is not criticism, and does not set out to be; it is a suggestive study of kindred souls. Emerson's work is kindling and inspiring; it unsettles rather than settles; it is not a lamp to guide your feet, it is a star to give you your bearings.

Carlyle and Ruskin fall into the same category. They sin against the classic virtues of repose, proportion, serenity, but this makes their penetrating power all the greater. Carlyle cannot rank with the great impartial historians, yet as a painter of historical characters and scenes the vividness and reality of his pictures are almost unequaled. Carlyle lacked the disinterestedness of the true artist. He had great power of description and characterization, but he could not as an historian stand apart from his subject as the great Greek and Roman historians do. He is a portion of all that he sees and describes. He is bent upon persuasion quite as much as upon portrayal. He could not succeed as a novelist or a poet, because of his vehement, intolerant nature. He succeeds as an historian only in portraying men in whom he sees the lineaments of his own character, as in Cromwell. He did not or could not live in the whole, as did his master, Goethe. His mind was

a steep incline. His opinions were like mountain torrents. Arnold, in one of his letters, complained that in his criticism of Goethe there was too much of *engouement*, — too much, I suppose, of the fondness of the gourmand for a particular dish, or of the toper for his favorite tipple. His enthusiasm was intemperate, and therefore unsound. Doubtless some such objection as this may be urged against most of Carlyle's criticisms. He was ruled by his character more than by his intellect; his feeling guided his vision. If he is not always a light to the reason, he is certainly an electric excitant to the imagination and the moral sense. In his essays, pamphlets, histories, we hardly get judicial estimates of things; rather do we get overestimates or underestimates. Yet always is there something that kindles and brings the blood to the surface. Carlyle will beget a stronger race than Arnold, but it will not be so cool and clear-headed. Emerson will fertilize more minds with new thought than Lowell, but there will be many more cranks and fanatics and hobbyists among them.

Professor Dowden says Landor falls below Shelley and Wordsworth because he had no divine message or oracle to deliver to the men of his generation, — no authentic word of the Lord to utter. Landor had great thoughts, but they were not of first-rate importance with reference to his times. He was more thoroughly imbued with the classic spirit than either

Shelley or Wordsworth, and the classic spirit is at ease in Zion. The modern world differs from the ancient in its moral stress and fervor. This moral stress and fervor both Shelley and Wordsworth shared, but Landor did not. Where would the world be in thought, in works, in civilization, had there been no one-sided, overloaded, fanatical men, — men of partial views, of half-truths, of one idea? Where would Christianity have been, under the play of disinterested intellect, without disciples, without devotees, without saints and martyrs, without its Paul and its Luther, without prejudice, without superstition, without inflexibility?

We might fitly contrast these two types of mind under the heads of Protestant and Catholic, the one personal, the other impersonal. With the Protestant type goes individualism, which, as I have said, is so marked a feature of the modern world. With the Catholic type goes institutionalism, which was so marked a feature of the ancient world. With the former goes the right of private judgment, innovation, progress, new forms of art; with the latter goes authority, obedience, the power of the past. The Protestant type is more capricious and willful; it is restless, venturesome, impatient of rules and precedents; the older type is more serene, composed, conservative, orderly. In criticism it is more objective; it upholds the standards, it lays down the law; it cherishes the academic spirit. The French mind

is the more Catholic; the English the more Protestant. In literature the Protestant type is the more subjective and creative; it makes new discoveries, it founds new orders. Catholicism is exterior, formal, imposing; it takes little account of personal needs and peculiarities, while Protestantism is almost entirely concerned with the private, interior world. Individualism in religion begat Protestantism, and upon Protestantism it begat the numerous progeny of the sects, the thousand and one isms that now divide the religious world. To this spirit religion is something personal and private to every man, and in no sense a matter of forms and rituals. In fact, individualism fairly confronts institutionalism. This spirit carried into the region of æsthetics or literature gives rise to like results, — to a freer play of personal taste and preferences, to more intense individual utterances, to new and unique types of artistic genius, and to new lines of activity in the æsthetic field.

Another name for it is the democratic spirit. Its special dangers are the crude, the odd, the capricious, just as the danger of institutionalism is the coldly formal, the lifeless, the traditional. In English literature the former begat Shakespeare, as it did Tupper; the latter begat Milton, as it did Young and Pollock. With institutionalism goes the divine right of kings, the sacredness of priests, the authority of forms and ceremonies, and the slavery of the masses;

with individualism goes the divinity of man, the sacredness of life, the right of private judgment, the decay of traditions and forms, and the birth of the modern spirit. With one goes stateliness, impressiveness, distinction, as well as the empty, the moribund, the despotic; with the other goes force, strenuousness, originality, as well as the loud, the amorphous, the fanatical.

V

Goethe said that a loving interest in the person and the works of an author, amounting to a certain one-sided enthusiasm, alone led to reality in criticism; all else was vanity. No doubt more will come of the contact of two minds under these circumstances than from what is called the judicial attitude; there will be more complete fusion and interpenetration; without a certain warmth and passion there is no fruitfulness, even in criticism. In the field of art and literature, to be disinterested does not mean to be cold and judicial; it means to be free from bias, free from theories and systems, with mind open to receive a clear impression of the work's characteristic merits and qualities.

It is tradition that always stands in the way of the new man. In politics, it is the political tradition; in religion, the religious tradition; and in literature, the literary tradition. Professional criticism is the guardian of the literary tradition, and this is

why any man who essays a new departure in literary art has reason to fear criticism or despise it, as the case may be.

It is when we take up any new work in the judicial spirit, bent upon judging and classifying, rather than upon enjoying and understanding, the conscious analytical intellect on duty and the sympathies and the intuitions under lock and key, that there is danger that judicial blindness will fall upon us. When we approach nature in the spirit of technical science, our minds already preoccupied with certain conclusions and systems, do we get as much of the joy and stimulus which she holds for us as do the children on the way to school of a spring morning with their hands full of wild flowers, or as does the gleesome saunterer over hills in summer with only love and appreciation uppermost in his mind?

Professional criticism often becomes mere pedagogical narrowness and hardness; it gets crushed over with rules and precedents, pinched and sterilized by routine and convention, so that a new work makes no impression upon it. The literary tradition, like the religious tradition, ceases to be vital and formative.

Is it not true that all first-class works have to be approached with a certain humility and free giving of one's self? In a sense, "except ye become as little children" ye cannot enter the kingdom of the great books.

I suppose that to get at the true inwardness of any imaginative work, we must read it as far as possible in its own spirit, and that if it does not engraft and increase its own spirit upon us, then it is feeble and may easily be brushed aside.

Criticism which has for its object the discovery of new talent and, in Sainte-Beuve's words, to "apportion to each kind of greatness its due influence and superiority," is one thing; and criticism the object of which is to uphold and enforce the literary tradition, is quite another. Consciously or unconsciously, when the trained reader opens a new book he is under the influence of one or the other of these notions, — either he submits himself to it disinterestedly, intent only upon seizing and appreciating its characteristic quality, or he comes prepossessed with certain rules and standards upon which his taste has been formed. In other words, he comes to the new work simply as a man, a human being seeking edification, or he comes clothed in some professional authority, seeking judgment.

Our best reading is a search for the excellent; but what is the excellent? Is there any final standard of excellence in literature? Each may be excellent after its kind, but kinds differ. There is one excellence of Milton and Arnold and the classic school, and another excellence of Shakespeare and Pope and Burns and Wordsworth and Whitman, or of the romantic and democratic school. The critic

is to hold a work up to its own ideal or standard. Of the perfect works, or the works that aim at perfection, at absolute symmetry and proportion, appealing to us through the cunning of their form, scheme, structure, details, ornamentation, we make a different demand from the one we make of a primitive, unique, individual utterance or expression of personality like "Leaves of Grass," in which the end is not form, but life; not perfection, but suggestion; not intellect, but character; not beauty, but power; not carving, or sculpture, or architecture, but the building of a man.

It is no doubt a great loss to be compelled to read any work of literary art in a conscious critical mood, because the purely intellectual interest in such a work which criticism demands, is far less satisfying than our æsthetic interest. The mood in which we enjoy a poem is analogous to that in which it was conceived. We have here the reason why the professional reviewer is so apt to miss the characteristic quality of the new book, and why the readers of great publishing houses make so many mistakes. They call into play a conscious mental force that is inimical to the emotional mood in which the work had its rise; what was love in the poet becomes a pale intellectual reflection in the critic.

Love must come first, or there can be no true criticism; the intellectual process must follow and be begotten by an emotional process. Indeed, criti-

cism is an afterthought; it is such an account as we can give of the experience we have had in private communion with the subject of it. The conscious analytical intellect takes up one by one, and examines the impression made upon our subconsciousness by the new poem or novel.

Where nothing has been sown, nothing can be reaped. The work that has yielded us no enjoyment will yield us no positive results in criticism. Dr. Louis Waldstein, in his suggestive work on "The Subconscious Self," discovers that the critical or intellectual mood is foreign to art; that it destroys or decreases the spontaneity necessary to creation. This is why the critical and the creative faculty so rarely go together, or why one seems to work against the other. Probably in all normal, well-balanced minds the appreciation of a work of the imagination is a matter of feeling and intuition long before it is a matter of intellectual cognizance. Not all minds can give a reason for the faith that is in them, and it is not important that they should; the main matter is the faith. Every great work of art will be found upon examination to have an ample ground of critical principles to rest upon, though in the artist's own mind not one of these principles may have been consciously defined.

Indeed, the artist who works from any theory is foredoomed to at least partial failure. And art that lends itself to any propaganda, or to any idea "out-

side its essential form, falls short of being a pure art creation."

The critical spirit, when it has hardened into fixed standards, is always a bar to the enjoyment or understanding of a poet. One then has a poetical creed, as he has a political or religious creed, and this creed is likely to stand between him and the appreciation of a new poetic type. Macaulay thought Leigh Hunt was barred from appreciating his "Lays of Ancient Rome" by his poetical creed, which may have been the case. Jeffrey was no doubt barred from appreciating Wordsworth by his poetical creed. It was Byron's poetical creed that led him to rank Pope so highly. A critic who holds to one of the conflicting creeds about fiction, either that it should be realistic or romantic, will not do justice to the other type. If Tolstoi is his ideal, he will set little value on Scott; or if he exalts Hawthorne, he will depreciate Howells. What the disinterested observer demands is the best possible work of each after its kind. Or, if he is to compare and appraise the two kinds, then I think that without doubt his conclusion will be that the realistic novel is the later, maturer growth, more in keeping with the modern demand for reality in all fields, and that the romantic belongs more to the world of childish things, which we are fast leaving behind us.

Our particular predilections in literature must, no doubt, be carefully watched. There is danger in

personal absorption in an author, — danger to our intellectual freedom. One would not feel for a poet the absorbing and exclusive love that the lover feels for his mistress, because one would rather have the whole of literature for his domain. One would rather admire Rabelais with Sainte-Beuve, as a Homeric buffoon, than be a real "Pantagruelist devotee," who finds a flavor even in "the dregs of Master François's cask" that he prefers to all others. No doubt some of us, goaded on by the opposite vice in readers and critics, have been guilty of an intemperate enthusiasm toward Whitman and Browning. To make a cult of either of these authors, or of any other, is to shut one's self up in a part when the whole is open to him. The opposite vice, that of violent personal antipathy, is equally to be avoided in criticism. Probably Sainte-Beuve was guilty of this vice in his attitude toward Balzac, Schérer in his criticism of Béranger, and Landor in his dislike of Dante. One might also cite Emerson's distaste for Poe and Shelley, and Arnold's antipathy to Victor Hugo's poetry. Likes and dislikes in literature that are temperamental, that are like the attraction or repulsion of bodies in different electrical conditions, are hard to be avoided, but the trained reader may hope to overcome them. Taste is personal, but the intellect is, or should be, impersonal, and to be able to guide the former by the light of the latter is the signal triumph of criticism.

VI

"THOU SHALT NOT PREACH"

After Reading Tolstoi on "What is Art?"

THERE is one respect in which pure art and pure science agree: both are disinterested, and seek the truth, each of its kind, for its own sake; neither has any axe to grind. Both would live in the whole, — one through reason and investigation, the other through imagination and contemplation. Science seeks to understand the universe, art to enjoy it. A man of pure science like Darwin is as disinterested as a great artist like Shakespeare. He has no practical or secondary ends; the truth alone is his quest. He is tracing the footsteps of creative energy through organic nature. He is like a detective working up a case. His theory about it is only provisional, for the moment. Every fact is welcome to him, and the more it seems to tell against his theory of the case, the more eagerly he weighs it and studies it. Indeed, the man of science follows an ideal as truly as does the poet, and will pass by fortune, honors, and all worldly success, to cleave to it. Tolstoi thinks that science for science' sake is as bad as art for art's

sake; but is not knowledge a reward in itself, and is there any higher good than that mastery of the intellect over the problems of the universe which science gives? By bending science to particular and secondary ends we lay the basis of our material civilization, but it is still true that the final end of science is, not our material benefit, but our mental enlightenment; nor is the highest end of art the good which the preacher and the moralist seek to give us. A poem of Milton's or Tennyson's carries its own proof, its own justification. When we demand a message of the poet, or of any artist, outside of himself, outside of the truth which he unconsciously conveys through his own personality and point of view, we degrade his art, or destroy that disinterestedness which is its crown. Art exists for ideal ends; it looks askance at devotees, at doctrinaires, at all men engaged in the dissemination of particular ideas. I am not now thinking of art as mere craft, but as the province of man's freest, most spontaneous, most joyous, most complete soul activity, — the kind of activity that has no other end, seeks no other reward, than it finds in or of itself, the joy of being and beholding, the free play of creative energy. Art does not rebuke vice, it depicts it; it does not urge reform, it shows us the reformers. Its work is play, its lesson is an allegory. The preacher works by selection and exclusion, the artist by inclusion and contrast.

When the resources of literary art are enlisted in

any propaganda, in the dissemination of particular ideas or doctrines, or when the end is moral or scientific or political or philosophical, and not æsthetic, the result is a mixed product, a cross between literature and something else, which may be very vigorous and serviceable, but which cannot give the kind of satisfaction that is imparted by a pure artistic creation. A great poem or work of art does not speak to any special and passing condition, mental or spiritual; its ministrations are neither those of meat nor those of medicine; it does not subserve any private or secondary ends, even the saving of our souls. The books that seem written for us are quite certain to lose in interest to the next generation. A great poem heals, not as the doctor heals, but as nature does, by bringing the conditions of health. It consoles, not as the priest consoles, but as love and life themselves do. It does not offer a special good, but a general benefaction.

I once heard Emerson quote with approval Shakespeare's saying, "Read what you most affect;" but no doubt a broad culture demands wide reading, and that we be on our guard against our particular predilections, because such predilections may lead us into narrow channels. Do the devotees of Browning, those who cry Browning, Browning, and Browning only, do him the highest honor? Do the disciples of Whitman, who would make a cult of him, live in the spirit of the whole, as Whitman himself tried to

live? — Whitman, who said that there may be any number of Supremes, and that the chief lesson to be learned under the master is how to destroy him? Our love for an author must not suggest the fondness of the epicure for a special dish, or partake of the lover's infatuation for his mistress. Infatuation is not permissible in literature. If art does not make us free of the whole, it fails of its purpose. Only the religious bigot builds upon specific texts, and only the one-sided, half-formed mind sees life through the eyes of a single author. In the æsthetic sphere one may serve many masters; he may give himself to none. One of the latest and most mature perceptions that comes to us is the perception of relativity, in art as well as in all other matters.

With respect to this question, both readers and writers may be divided into two classes, the interested and the disinterested, — those who are seeking special and personal ends, and those who are seeking general, universal ends.

The poet is best pleased with the disinterested readers and admirers of his work; that is, with those who take to it on the broadest human grounds, and not upon grounds merely personal to themselves. Thus Longfellow will find a wider and more disinterested audience than Whittier, because his Muse is less in the service of special ideas; he looks at life less as a Quaker and a Puritan, and more as a man.

The special ideas of an age, its moral enthusiasms and revolts, give place to other ideas and enthusiasms, which in their turn give place to others; but there are certain currents of thought and emotion that are perennial, certain experiences common to all men and peoples. Such a poem as Gray's Elegy, for instance, is filled with the breadth of universal human life. On the other hand, such a work as Schiller's "Robbers," or Goethe's "Werther," seems to us like an empty shell picked up on the shore, the life entirely gone out of it. One can see why Poe is looked upon by foreign critics as outranking any of our more popular New England poets. It is because his work has more of the ubiquitous character of true art, is less pledged to moral and special ends, less the result of personal tastes and attractions, and more the pure flame of the unpledged æsthetic nature. The "Raven" and the "Bells" have that play, that scorn of personal ends, that potential spiritual energy, of great art. Poe does not increase our stock of ideas or widen the sphere of our sympathies. He was a conjurer with words. As a poet he used language for the music he could evoke from it. What is the mental content of his "Annabel Lee"? It is as vague and shadowy as its angels and demons, its sepulchres and seraphim, and its kingdom by the sea.

Is it Coleridge who tells of an artist who always copied his wife's legs in his pictures, and thereby

won great fame? The creative touch it is that marks the artist. He smites the rock, and a fountain gushes forth. Tennyson has the artist nature in greater measure than Wordsworth, a more flexible receptive spirit, though he never attains to the homely pathos or the moral grandeur of the latter. Yet individual convictions and attractions played a less part in his poetry. Wordsworth gathered the harvest of his own feelings and experiences, Tennyson that of other men as well. One reaped only where he had sown, the other where all men had sown. One is colored by Westmoreland, the other by the whole of England. Wordsworth wrote more from character and natural bias than Tennyson. What nature does with a man, — that is no credit to him; but what he does with nature. If his character inspired the poem, is it not less than if his imagination had inspired it? What a man does out of and independent of himself, or the degree in which he transcends his own experience and partialities and rises into universal relations, — is not that the measure of him as an artist? If I tell only what I know, what I have felt, what I have seen, no matter how well I do it, that is not to come into the sphere the artist dwells in. What Wordsworth writes is more personal to himself, more out of his own life, than what Tennyson writes. He is more limited by his temperament and natural bias than Tennyson is by

his. His word is more inevitable, more the word of fate, but is it not therefore less the word of art? Be sincere, be sincere; be not too sincere, lest you substitute a moral rigidity for the flexibility demanded by art. The artist is never the slave of his sincerity.

Graphic power is only a minor part of artistic power. One can say what one has felt, and tell what one has experienced; but the artist can tell what he has not experienced, and say what he has not felt. He can make the assumed, the imaginary, real to himself and to his reader. He can depict the passion of love, of anger, of remorse, though he may never have felt them. Many persons have written one good novel, but not a second, because in the first they exhausted their experience; to transcend that is denied them. True art will have many messages and many morals, as life and nature have, but we must draw them out for ourselves. They do not lead, they follow; they do not make the argument, they are made by it. Let us repeat and re-repeat. Art makes us free of the whole, — not art for craft's sake, but art as implying the entire sphere of man's spontaneous æsthetic activity. Beauty is indeed its own excuse for being. Literature is an end in and of itself, as much as music is or religion is. Or are we religious only upon pay? What message has a bird, a flower, a summer day, frost, rain, wind, snow? There are sermons in stones — when we put them

there. What message has Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Virgil, or any true poet? The message we have the power to draw from him, and no two of us will draw the same. Art is a circle; it is complete within itself; it returns forever upon itself. There is no great poetry without great ideas, and yet the ideas must exist as impulse, will, emotion, and not lie upon the surface as formulas. The enemies of art are reflection, special ideas, conscious intellectual processes, because these things isolate us and shut us off from the life of the whole, — from that which we reach through our sentiments and emotions. The æsthetic mood, says the author of "The Subconscious Self," "is, in its essence, receptive, contemplative, distinctly personal, and therefore free from purpose and conscious selection." "Whenever a work of art is the vehicle for an idea or purpose outside of its essential form, it falls short of being a pure art creation, and fails in its appeal to the æsthetic mood, whilst, be it conceded, it may serve some other but secondary purpose, which belongs to the province of the archæologist, the art historian, and the collector," and, we may add, the moralist and preacher. Wordsworth's poet was content if he "might enjoy the things that others understood," and this is always characteristic of the poetic mood. Absorption, contemplation, enjoyment, and not criticism and reflection, are as the air it breathes. Byron was a great poet, but, said Goethe, "the mo-

ment he reflects, he is a child." It is better that the poet should not be a child when he reflects, but it is much more important that he be a child when he feels. His power as a poet does not lie in the reflective faculties, but in the direct, joyous, solvent power of his spirit.

We do not find our individual selves in great art, but the humanity of which we are partakers. Something is brought home to us; but not to our partialities, rather to our higher selves. We are never so little selfish and hampered by our individualism as when admiring a great work of the imagination. No doubt our modern world calls for doctors of the soul in a sense that the more healthful and joyous pagan world had no need of. Still, so far as the poet is a doctor or a priest, so far does he fail to live in the spirit of the whole.

It is, I think, in these or similar considerations that we are to look for the justification of the phrase, now almost everywhere disputed, "Art for art's sake." It is only saying that art is to have no partial or secondary ends, but is to breathe forth the spirit of the whole. It must be disinterested; it is to hold the mirror up to nature. It may hold the mirror up to the vices and follies of the age, but must not take sides. It represents; it does not judge. The matter is self-judged in the handling of the true artist. Didactic poetry or didactic fiction can never rank high. Thou shalt not preach or teach; thou

shalt portray and create, and have ends as universal as has nature.

Our moral teachers and preachers often fail to see that the first condition of a work of pure art is that it be disinterested, that it be a total and complete product in and of itself; and that it is its own excuse for being. Its business is to represent, to portray, or, as Aristotle has it, to imitate nature, and not to preach or to moralize. Our ethical and religious writers and speakers are apt to call this artistic disinterestedness indifferentism. If the novelist does not openly and avowedly take sides with his good characters against his bad, or if, as Taine declares his function to be, he contents himself with representing them to us as they are, whole, not blaming, not punishing, not mutilating, transferring them to us intact and separate, and leaving "us the right of judging if we desire it," — if this is his attitude, says the Rev. Washington Gladden in his late brochure on "Art and Morality," he is guilty of indifferentism. "His work begins to be the work of a malefactor, and he himself is preparing to be fit company for fiends." Mr. Gladden misapprehends Taine, whom he quotes, and he misapprehends the spirit and method of art. If the artist does really convey to us the impression that he is personally indifferent as to which triumphs in life, good or evil, and that he is as well pleased with the one as with

the other, then he is culpable and merits this harsh language.

What art demands is that the artist's personal convictions and notions, his likes and dislikes, do not obtrude themselves at all; that good and evil stand judged in his work by the logic of events, as they do in nature, and not by any special pleading on his part. He does not hold a brief for either side; he exemplifies the working of the creative energy. He is neither a judge nor an advocate; he is a witness on the stand; he tells how the thing fell out, and the more impartial he is as a witness, the better. We, the jury, shall watch carefully for any bias or leaning on his part. We shall try his testimony by the rules of evidence; in this case, by our acquaintance with other imaginative works and by our experience of life. The great artist works in and through and from moral ideas; his works are indirectly a criticism of life. He is moral without having a moral. The moment a moral or an immoral intention obtrudes itself, that moment he begins to fall from grace as an artist. He confesses his inability to let nature speak for herself. He is inadequate to the logic of events, and gives us a logic of his own. Shakespeare is our highest type of the disinterested artist. Does he do aught but hold the mirror up to nature? Is his work overlaid with an avowed moral intention? Does he go behind the returns, so to speak? Does he tamper with the logic of events,

the fate of character? What is the moral of "Hamlet"? Has any one yet found out? Yet the plays all fall within the scope of moral ideas; they treat moral ideas with energy and depth, as Voltaire said of English poetry in general.

We must discriminate between a conscious moral purpose and an unconscious moral impulse. A work of art arises primarily out of the emotions, and not out of the intellect, and is sound and true to the extent to which it repeats the method of nature. Ruskin, whom Mr. Gladden quotes, was of course right when he said that the art of a nation is an exponent of its ethical state. But the condition of first importance with the artist is, not that he should have an ethical purpose, but that he should be ethically sound. He may work with ethical ideas, but not directly for them. The preacher speaks for them; the poet speaks out of them, — he plays with them, he takes his will of them; they follow, but do not lead him. Again, Ruskin says, "He is the greatest artist who has embodied in the sum of his works the greatest number of the greatest ideas;" but he is an artist only by virtue of having embodied these ideas in an imaginative form. If they run through his work as homilies or intellectual propositions, or lie upon it as moral reflections, they are not within the vital sphere of art.

Art is not thought, but will, impulse, intuition; not ideas, but ideality. None knew this better than

Ruskin. No great artist can be cornered with the question, "What for?" What is creation for? What are you and I for? The catechism answers promptly enough, and the artist does not contradict it. But of necessity his answer is not so dogmatic; or rather, he does not give a direct answer at all, but lets the epitome of life which he brings answer for him. He is not to exhibit the forces of life harnessed to a purpose and tilling some man's private domain, but he is to show them in spontaneous play and fusion, obeying no law but their own, and working to universal ends. His work is finally for our edification. If it be also for our reproof, he must conceal his purpose so well that we do not suspect it. He must let the laws of life alone speak for him. Sainte-Beuve has a passage bearing upon this subject which is admirable. He had been censured as a critic for being too lax in his dealings with the morality of works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Let me quote his reply: "If there are some readers (and I think I know some) who would prefer to see me censure it oftener and more roundly, I beg them to observe that I succeed much better by provoking them to condemn it themselves than by taking the lead and seeming to try to impose a judgment of my own every time. In the long run, if a critic does this (or an artist either), he always wearies and offends his readers. They like to feel themselves more severe than the critic. I leave them that plea-

sure. For me, it is enough if I represent and depict things faithfully, so that every one may profit from the intellectual substance and the good language, and be in a position to judge for himself the other, wholly moral parts. There, however, I am careful not to be crucial." French art is less moral than English art, not because it preaches less, but because it is more given to levity and trifling, because it exaggerates the part one element plays in life, and because it draws less inspiration from fundamental ethical ideas. It may at times be guilty of indifferentism, but against very little English or American art can this charge be made.

The great distinction of art is that it aims to see life steadily and to see it whole. This is its high and unique service; it would enable us to live in the whole and in the spirit of the whole; not in the part called morality, or philosophy, or religion, or beauty, but in the unity resulting from the fusion and transformation of these varied elements. It affords the one point of view whence the world appears harmonious and complete. The moralist, the preacher, seizes upon a certain part of the world, and makes much of that; the philosopher seizes upon another part, the æsthete upon another; only the great artist comprehends and includes all these, and sees life and nature as a vital, consistent whole.

Hence it is that a work of pure art is a complete product in a sense that no other production of a

man's mind is; or, as Ruskin says, "It is the work of the whole spirit of man," and faithfully reflects that spirit. The intellect may write the sermon, or the essay, or the criticism, but the character, the entire life and personality are implicated in a creative work.

Disinterestedness means no more in art, in letters, than it means in life. In our kind deeds, our acts of charity, in love, in virtue, we act from disinterested motives. We have no ulterior purpose. These things are their own reward. A noble life is disinterested; it bestows benefits without thought of self. But it is not indifferent. Indifference is personal, — it is a state in which one personal motive cancels another; whereas disinterestedness is impersonal, — it is the complete effacement of self. It is a high, heroic moral state, while indifference is a lax or negative state. We are disinterested when we rescue a child from drowning or stop a runaway horse, but we are not indifferent. A novelist is disinterested when he has no motives but those inherent in his story, no purpose but to hold the mirror up to nature. He is interested and departs from his high calling when he seeks to enforce a particular moral, or to indoctrinate his reader with a particular set of ideas. And yet if he betrays indifference as to the issues of right and wrong, that is a vice; it is contrary to the self-effacement which art demands. To obtrude your indifference is of the same order of faults as to obtrude your

preferences. The innate necessities of the situation may alone speak.

To suppress or to ignore the world of vice and sin is not to be moral; to portray it is not to be immoral. But to gloat over it, to dwell fondly upon it, to return to it, to exaggerate it, to roll it under the tongue as a sweet morsel, — that is to be immoral; and to treat it as time and nature do or as the great artists do, as affording contrasts and difficulties, and disturbing but not destroying the balance of life, is within the scope of the moral. Art must make us free of the whole; every work must in a measure reflect the whole of life; if it dwell too much on that part called sin and evil, it is false to its ideal; it must keep the balance; it must be true to the integrity of nature. All things are permissible in their time and place. That a thing is real and true is no reason why it should go into the artist's picture; but that it belongs there, that it is organic there, a part of a vital whole, and that that whole is a fair representation of human life — in this is the justification. Not every scene in nature composes well into a picture, and not every phase of human life is equally significant in a creative work. That nature does this or that is no reason why the artist should do it, unless he can show an equal insouciance and an equal prodigality and power. He must take what he can make his own and imbue with the spirit of life. I lately read a novel by one

of our most promising young novelists, in which there was a streak of vulgar realism, forced in, evidently, under the pressure of a theory, — the theory that art is never to shrink from the true. It offended because it was entirely gratuitous; there was no necessity for it. If it was true, it was not apt; if it was real, it was not fit; it jarred; it was dragged in by main force; it was a false note. Is not anything disagreeable in a novel of the imagination a false note? Disagreeable, I mean, not by reason of the subject matter, but by reason of the treatment. Dante makes hell fascinating by his treatment.

There are three ways of treating the under side of nature. There is the childlike simplicity of the Biblical writers, who think no evil; there is the artistic frankness of the great dramatic poets, who know the value of foils and contrasts, and who cannot ignore any element of life; and there is the license and levity of the lascivious poets, who live in the erotic alone. Both Ibsen and Tolstoi have been condemned as immoral only because their artistic scheme embraces all the elements that are potent in life. Of levity, of exaggeration, they are not guilty. If Zola is to be condemned, it is probably because he makes too prominent certain things, and thus destroys the proportion. In nature nothing is detached. Her great currents flow on and purify themselves. The ugly, the unclean, are quickly lost sight of; the sky and the sun cover all, bathe

all. But art is detachment: our attention is fixed upon a few points, and a drop or two too much of certain things spoils it all. In nature a drop or two too much does not matter; we quickly escape, we find compensation. A bad odor in the open air is of little consequence; but in Zola's books the bad odors are as in a closed room, and we soon pray to be delivered from them.

VII

DEMOCRACY AND LITERATURE

THE one new thing in the world in our day is democracy, the coming forward of the people, and that which has grown out of it, or which goes along with it, — science, free inquiry, the industrial system, the humanitarian spirit. The old and past world from which we inherit our literary tastes and standards was characterized by a condition of things quite different, — the supremacy of the few, the leadership of the hero, the strong man, — the picturesque age that gave us art, theology, philosophy, and the great epic poems. It was the youth of the race. Mankind seems now fast nearing its majority. The bewitching, the delusive, the unreasoning, pathetic time of youth is past. What the man loses and what he gains in passing from youth to manhood the race has lost and has gained in passing from the age of myth to the age of science. A charm, an innocence, a susceptibility, a credulity, and many other things are gone; a seriousness, a reasonableness, a breadth of outlook, power to deal with real things, sanity, and self-control, have come. Youth is cruel, age is kind and considerate. All forms,

ceremonies, titles, all conferred dignities and arbitrary distinctions, all pomp and circumstance, count for less and less in the world. Art is less and less; nature is more and more. The extrinsic, the put on, the ornamental, the factitious, count for less and less; theology, metaphysics, the sacredness of priests, the divinity of kings, count for less and less, while the real, the true, the essential, in all fields, count for more. It is doubtful if art for art's sake can ever be in the future what it has been in the past. We are too deeply absorbed in the reality; we care less and less for the symbol and more and more for the thing symbolized. The monarchical idea is dwindling; the throne as a symbol has lost its force; the old religious language of supplication and praise begins to have a hollow, archaic sound. The idea of the fatherhood of God is fast taking the place of the idea of the despotism of God. It has taken mankind all these centuries to rise to the conception of a being with whom the language of excessive flattery and adulation seems out of place. The democratic idea will eventually penetrate and modify our religious notions. We shall no longer seek to propitiate an offended deity by groveling in the dust before an imaginary throne. The despot goes out, the Brother comes in. All these things and many more cluster around the word democracy.

What is the import of the word as applied to literature? How far will it carry in this field? Is the

democratic movement favorable or unfavorable to the growth of true literature? It has been often said that literature is essentially aristocratic; that is, I suppose, that it implies a degree of excellence, a kind of excellence, quite beyond the appreciation of the masses. This is no doubt in a measure true, and always has been true. While the mass of the people are not good offhand judges of the best literature, it is equally true that great literature — literature that has breadth and power, like the English Bible or like Bunyan, and many other books that transcend the sphere of mere letters — makes its way more or less among the people. The highest ideals in any sphere can never draw the many; yet the few, the elect who are drawn by them, are probably just as sure to appear in a democracy as in an oligarchy.

To some readers democracy in literature seems to suggest only an incursion of the loud, the vulgar, the cheap and meretricious. Apparently it suggests only these things to Mr. Edmund Gosse, whose volume "Questions at Issue" contains an essay upon this subject.

Mr. Gosse congratulates the guild of letters that the summits of literature have not yet been submerged by the flood of democracy. The standards have not been lowered in obedience to the popular taste.

But Mr. Gosse thinks the social revolution or

evolution now imminent will require a new species of poetry, that this poetry will be democratic to a degree at present unimaginable, though just what it is to be democratic in poetry is not very clear to him. He says: "The aristocratic tradition is still paramount in all art. Kings, princesses, and the symbols of chivalry are as essential to poetry, as we now conceive it, as roses, stars, or nightingales," and he does not see what will be left if this romantic phraseology is done away with. We shall certainly have left what we had before these types and symbols came into vogue, — nature, life, man, God. If out of these things we cannot supply ourselves with new types and values, then certainly we shall be hard put.

The critic cites the popularity of Tennyson as an illustration of the influence of literature upon democracy rather than of democracy upon literature. It is true that Tennyson was not begotten by the democratic spirit, but by the old feudal spirit; to him the people were but a hundred-headed beast, and his temper toward this beast, if reports are true, was anything but democratic. Tennyson was of the haughty, exclusive, lordly Norman spirit, and his popularity simply showed how widespread the appreciation of literary excellence may become in democratic times.

Of course universal suffrage is of slight import in literature: not by the vote of the many, but by

the judgment of the few, are the true standards upheld. The novels that sell by the hundred thousand will not be the best, or even the second or third best, and their great vogue only indicates that the diffusion of education has enormously enlarged the reading public, and that in democratic times, as in all other times, there never has been and probably never will be enough good taste to go around.

Democracy, as it affects, or should affect, literature, no more means a lowering of the standard of excellence than it means a lowering of the standards in science, or in art, or in farming or engineering or ship-building, or in the art of living itself. It means a lifting up of the average, with the great prizes, the high ideals, as attractive and as difficult as ever. Because the people are crude and run for the moment after the cheap and meretricious, we are not therefore to infer that the cheap and meretricious will permanently content them. Democracy in literature, as exemplified by the two great modern democrats in letters, Whitman and Tolstoi, means a new and more deeply religious way of looking at mankind, as well as at all the facts and objects of the visible world. It means, furthermore, the finding of new artistic motives and values in the people, in science and the modern spirit, in liberty, fraternity, equality, in the materialism and industrialism of man's life as we know it in our day and land, — the carrying into imaginative fields the quality of com-

mon humanity, that which it shares with real things and with all open-air nature, with hunters, farmers, sailors, and real workers in all fields.

The typical democratic poet will hold and wield his literary and artistic endowment as a common, everyday man, the brother and equal of all, and never for a moment as the man of exceptional parts and advantages, exclusive and aloof. His poems will imply a great body of humanity — the masses, the toilers — and will carry into emotional and ideal fields the atmosphere of these.

Behold the artistic motives furnished by feudalism, by royalty, by lords and ladies, by the fears and superstitions of the past, by mythology and ecclesiasticism, by religious and political terrorism in all their manifold forms. Art and literature have lived upon these things for ages. Can democracy, can the worth and picturesqueness of the people, furnish no worthy themes and motives for the poets? Can science, can the present day, can the religion of humanity, the conquest of nature's forces, inspire no poetic enthusiasm and give rise to great art rivaling that of the past? As between the past and the present, undoubtedly the difficulty is not in the poverty of the material of to-day, but in the inadequacy of the man. It requires a great spirit, a powerful personality, to master and absorb the diverse and complex elements of our time and imbue them with poetic enthusiasm.

The humanitarian enthusiasm as a *motif* in literature and art — the inspiration begotten by the contemplation of the wrongs, the sufferings, and the hopes of the people — undoubtedly came in with democracy. It was quite unknown to the ancient and to the feudal world. To all the more vital voices of our time this enthusiasm gives the tone. How pronounced it is in two of our latest and most promising poets, Mr. Edwin Markham and Mr. William Vaughn Moody!

It is hard to shake off the conviction that the old order of things had the advantage of picturesqueness. Is it because it is so hard to free ourselves from the illusions of time and distance? Charm, enticement, dwell with the remote, the unfamiliar. The now, the here, are vulgar and commonplace. We find it hard to realize that the great deeds were done on just such a day as this, and that the actors in them were just such men as we see about us. Then the days of one's youth seem strange and incredible; how different their light from this hard, prosy glare! Our distrust of our own day and land as furnishing suitable material for poetry and romance doubtless springs largely from this illusion.

At the same time, a mechanical and industrial age like ours no doubt offers a harder problem to the imaginative producer than the ages of faith and fanaticism of the past. The steam whistle, the type of our civilization, what can the poet make of it? The

clank of machinery, it must be confessed, is less inspiring than the clash of arms; the railroad is less pleasing to look upon than the highway, because it is more arbitrary and mechanical. In the same way, the steamship seems unrelated to the great forces and currents of the globe. Yet to put these things in poetry only requires time, only requires a more complete adjustment of our lives to them, and hence the proper vista and association. As is always the case, it is a question of the man and not of the material. Goethe said to Eckermann, "Our German æsthetical people are always talking about poetical and unpoetical objects, and in one respect they are not quite wrong; yet at bottom no real object is unpoetical, if the poet knows how to use it properly," — if he can throw enough feeling into it. I lately read a poem by one of our younger poets on an entirely modern theme, the building of the railroad, — the gang of men cutting through hills, tunneling mountains, filling valleys, bridging chasms, etc. But, though vividly described, it did not quite reach the poetical; it lacked the personal and the human; it was realistic without the freeing touch of the idealistic. Some story, some interest, some enthusiasm overarching it, would have supplied an atmosphere that was lacking. We cannot be permanently interested in the gigantic or in sheer brute power unless they are in some way related to life and its aspirations. The battle of man with man is

more interesting than the battle of man with rocks and chasms, because men can strike back, and victory is not to be had on such easy terms.

The same objection cannot be urged against Mr. William Vaughn Moody's poem on the steam engine, which he treats under the figure of "The Brute," — a poem of great imaginative power in which the human interest is constantly paramount. The still small voice of humanity is always heard through the Brute's roar, as may be seen in the first stanza:

"Through his might men work their wills;
They have boweled out the hills
For food to keep him toiling in the cages they have wrought;
And they fling him hour by hour
Limbs of men to give him power,
Brains of men to give him cunning; and for dainties to devour
Children's souls, the little worth; hearts of women, cheaply bought.
He takes them and he breaks them, but he gives them scanty thought."

Quite different is the treatment of "The Lightning Express" by a Western poet, Mr. J. P. Irvine, yet the poetic note is clearly and surely struck in his stanzas too: —

"In storm and darkness, night and day,
Through mountain gorge or level way,

With lightening rein and might unspent,
And head erect in scorn of space,
Holds, neck-and-neck, with time a race,
Flame-girt across a continent.

Think not of danger; every wheel
Of all that clank and roll below
Rings singing answers, steel for steel,
Beneath the hammer's testing blow;
And what though fields go swirling round,
And backward swims the mazy ground,
So swift the herds seem standing still,
As scared they dash from hill to hill;
And though the brakes may grind to fire
The gravel as they grip the tire
And holding, strike a startling vein
Of tremor through the surging train,
The hand of him who guides the rein
Is all-controlling and intent;
Fear not, although the race you ride
Is on the whirlwind, side by side,
With time across a continent."

What are the sources of the interesting in life? Novelty is one, but it is short-lived; beauty and sublimity are others, and are more lasting. But the main source of the interesting is human association. The landscape that is written over with human history, how it holds us and draws us! All phases of modern industrial life — the miner, the lumberman, the road-builder, the engineer, the factory-hand, are

available for poetic treatment to him who can bring the proper fund of human association, who can make the human element in these things paramount over the mechanical element. The more of nature you get in, the more the picture has a background of earth and sky, or of great human passions and heroisms, the more the imagination is warmed and moved. The railroad is itself a blotch upon the earth, but it has a mighty background. In itself it is at war with every feature of the landscape it passes through; it stains the snows, it befouls the water, it poisons the air, it smuts the grass and the foliage, it expels the peace and the quiet, it puts to rout every rural divinity. It adapts itself to nothing; it is as arbitrary as a cyclone and as killing as a pestilence. Yet a train of cars thundering through storm and darkness, racing with winds and clouds, is a sublime object to contemplate; it is sublime because of its triumph over time and space, and because of the danger and dread that compass it about. It has a tremendous human background. The body-killing and soul-blighting occupations peculiar to our civilization are not of themselves suggestive of poetic thoughts; but if Dante made poetry out of hell, would not a nature copious and powerful enough make poetry out of the vast and varied elements of our materialistic civilization?

VIII

POETRY AND ELOQUENCE

"WHERE does eloquence end, where does poetry begin?" inquires Renan in his "Future of Science." And he goes on to say, "The whole difference lies in a peculiar harmony, in a more or less sonorous ring, with regard to which an experienced faculty never hesitates."

Is not the "sonorous ring," however, more characteristic of eloquence than of poetry? Poetry does begin where eloquence ends; it is a higher and finer harmony. Nearly all men feel the power of eloquence, but poetry does not sway the multitude; it does not sway at all, — it lifts, and illuminates, and soothes. It reaches the spirit, while eloquence stops with the reason and the emotions.

Eloquence is much the more palpable, real, available; it is a wind that fills every sail and makes every mast bend, while poetry is a breeze touched with a wild perfume from field or wood. Poetry is consistent with perfect tranquillity of spirit; a true poem may have the calm of a summer day, the placidity of a mountain lake, but eloquence is a torrent, a tempest, mass in motion, an army with banners,

the burst of a hundred instruments of music. Tennyson's "Maud" is a notable blending of the two.

There is something martial in eloquence, the roll of the drum, the cry of the fife, the wheel and flash of serried ranks. Its end is action; it shapes events, it takes captive the reason and the understanding. Its basis is earnestness, vehemence, depth of conviction.

There is no eloquence without heat, and no poetry without light. An earnest man is more or less an eloquent man. Eloquence belongs to the world of actual affairs and events; it is aroused by great wrongs and great dangers, it flourishes in the forum and the senate. Poetry is more private and personal, is more for the soul and the religious instincts; it courts solitude and wooes the ideal.

Anything swiftly told or described, the sense of speed and volume, is, or approaches, eloquence; while anything heightened and deepened, any meaning and beauty suddenly revealed, is, or approaches, poetry. Hume says of the eloquence of Demosthenes, "It is rapid harmony, exactly adjusted to the sense. It is vehement reasoning without any appearance of art; it is disdain, anger, boldness, freedom, involved in a continual stream of argument."

The passions of eloquence and poetry differ in this respect; one is reason inflamed, the other is imagination kindled.

Any object of magnitude in swift motion, a horse

at the top of his speed, a regiment of soldiers on the double quick, a train of cars under full way, moves us in a way that the same object at rest does not. The great secret of eloquence is to set mass in motion, to marshal together facts and considerations, imbue them with passion, and hurl them like an army on the charge, upon the mind of the reader or hearer.

The pleasure we derive from eloquence is more acute, more physiological, I might say, more of the blood and animal spirits, than our pleasure from poetry. I imagine it was almost a dissipation to have heard a man like Father Taylor. One's feelings and emotions were all out of their banks like the creeks in spring. But this was largely the result of his personal magnetism and vehemence of utterance.

The contrast between eloquent prose and poetic prose would be more to the point. The pleasure from each is precious and genuine, but our pleasure from the latter is no doubt more elevated and enduring.

Gibbon's prose is often eloquent, never poetical. Ruskin's prose is at times both, though his temperament is not that of the orator. There is more caprice than reason in him. The prose of De Quincey sometimes has the "sonorous ring" of which Renan speaks. The following passage from his essay on "The Philosophy of Roman History" is a good sample: —

"The battle of Actium was followed by the final conquest of Egypt. That conquest rounded and integrated the glorious empire; it was now circular as a shield, orbicular as the disk of a planet; the great Julian arch was now locked into the cohesion of granite by its last keystone. From that day forward, for three hundred years, there was silence in the world; no muttering was heard; no eye winked beneath the wing. Winds of hostility might still rave at intervals, but it was on the outside of the mighty empire, it was at a dreamlike distance; and, like the storms that beat against some monumental castle, 'and at the doors and windows seem to call,' they rather irritated and vivified the sense of security, than at all disturbed its luxurious lull."

Contrast with this a passage from Emerson's first prose work, "Nature," wherein the poetic element is more conspicuous: —

"The poet, the orator, bred in the woods, whose senses have been nourished by their fair and appeasing changes, year after year, without design and without heed, shall not lose their lesson altogether, in the roar of cities or the broil of politics. Long hereafter, amidst agitation and terror in national councils, — in the hour of revolution, — these solemn images shall reappear in their morning lustre, as fit symbols and words of the thoughts which the passing events shall awaken. At the call of a noble sentiment, again the woods wave, the pines murmur,

the river rolls and shines, and the cattle low upon the mountains, as he saw and heard them in his infancy. And with these forms, the spells of persuasion, the keys of power are put into his hands."

Or this passage from Carlyle's "French Revolution," shall we call it eloquent prose or poetic prose?

"In this manner, however, has the Day bent downwards. Wearied mortals are creeping home from their field labors; the village artisan eats with relish his supper of herbs, or has strolled forth to the village street for a sweet mouthful of air and human news. Still summer eventide everywhere! The great sun hangs flaming on the uttermost northwest; for it is his longest day this year. The hilltops, rejoicing, will ere long be at their ruddiest, and blush goodnight. The thrush in green dells, on long-shadowed leafy spray, pours gushing his glad serenade, to the babble of brooks grown audible; silence is stealing over the Earth."

What noble eloquence in Tacitus! Indeed, eloquence was natural to the martial and world-subduing Roman; but his poetry is for the most part of a secondary order. It is often said of French poetry that it is more eloquent than poetic. Of English poetry the reverse is probably true, though of such a poet as Byron it seems to me that eloquence is the chief characteristic.

Byron never, to my notion, touches the deeper and finer poetic chords. He is witty, he is brilliant,

he is eloquent, but is he ever truly poetical? He stirs the blood, he kindles the fancy, but does he ever diffuse through the soul the joy and the light of pure poetry? Goethe expressed almost unbounded admiration for Byron, yet admitted that he was too worldly-minded, and that a great deal of his poetry should have been fired off in Parliament in the shape of parliamentary speeches. Wordsworth, on the other hand, when he was not prosy and heavy, was poetical; he was never eloquent.

A fine sample of eloquence in poetry is Browning's "How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix." Of its kind there is nothing in the language to compare with it. One needs to read such a piece occasionally as a moral sanitary measure; it aerates his emotions as a cataract does a creek. Scott's highest excellence as a poet is his eloquence. The same is true of Macaulay and of Campbell, though the latter's "To the Rainbow" breathes the spirit of true poetry.

Among our own poets Halleck's "Marco Bozzaris" thrills us with its fiery eloquence. Dr. Holmes's "Old Ironsides" also is just what such a poem should be, just what the occasion called for, a rare piece of rhymed eloquence.

Eloquence is so good, so refreshing, it is such a noble and elevating excitement, that one would fain have more of it, even in poetry. It is too rare and precious a product to be valued lightly.

Here is a brief example of Byron's eloquence: —

"There, where death's brief pang was quickest,
And the battle's wreck lay thickest,
Strewed beneath the advancing banner
Of the eagles' burning crest, —
There with thunder-clouds to fan her
Victory beaming from her breast!
While the broken line enlarging
Fell, or fled along the plain; —
There be sure *Murat* was charging!
There he ne'er shall charge again!"

This from Tennyson is of another order: —

"Thy voice is heard through rolling drums
That beat to battle where he stands;
Thy face across his fancy comes,
And gives the battle to his hands:
A moment, while the trumpets blow,
He sees his brood about thy knee;
The next, like fire, he meets the foe,
And strikes him dead for thine and thee."

The chief value of all patriotic songs and poems, like Mrs. Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic," or Mr. Stedman's John Brown poem, or Randall's "Maryland," or Burns's "Bannockburn," or Whitman's "Beat! Beat! Drums," is their impassioned eloquence. Patriotism, war, wrong, slavery, these are the inspirers of eloquence.

Of course no sharp line can be drawn between

eloquence and poetry; they run together, they blend in all first-class poems; yet there is a wide difference between the two, and it is probably in the direction I have indicated. Power and mastery in either field are the most precious of human gifts.

IX

GILBERT WHITE AGAIN

ONE of the few books which I can return to and re-read every six or seven years is Gilbert White's "Selborne." It has a perennial charm. It is much like country things themselves. One does not read it with excitement or eager avidity; it is in a low key; it touches only upon minor matters; it is not eloquent, or witty, or profound; it has only now and then a twinkle of humor or a glint of fancy, and yet it has lived an hundred years and promises to live many hundreds of years more. So many learned and elaborate treatises have sunk beneath the waves upon which this cockle-shell of a book rides so safely and buoyantly! What is the secret of its longevity? One can do little more than name its qualities without tracing them to their sources. It is simple and wholesome, like bread, or meat, or milk. Perhaps it is just this same unstrained quality that keeps the book alive. Books that are piquant and exciting like condiments, or cloying like confectionery or pastry, it seems, have much less chance of survival. The secret of longevity of a man — what is it? Sanity, moderation, regularity, and that plus

vitality, which is a gift. The book that lives has these things, and it has that same plus vitality, the secret of which cannot be explored. The sensational, intemperate books set the world on fire for a day, and then end in ashes and forgetfulness.

White's book diffuses a sort of rural England atmosphere through the mind. It is not the work of a city man who went down into the country to write it up, but of a born countryman, — one who had in the very texture of his mind the flavor of rural things. Then it is the growth of a particular locality. Let a man stick his staff into the ground anywhere and say, "This is home," and describe things from that point of view, or as they stand related to that spot, — the weather, the fauna, the flora, — and his account shall have an interest to us it could not have if not thus located and defined. This is one secret of White's charm. His work has a home air, a certain privacy and particularity. The great world is afar off ; Selborne is as snug and secluded as a chimney corner; we get an authentic glimpse into the real life of one man there; we see him going about intent, lovingly intent, upon every phase of nature about him. We get glimpses into humble cottages and into the ways and doings of the people; we see the bacon drying in the chimneys; we see the poor gathering in Wolmer Forest the sticks and twigs dropped by the rooks in building their nests; we see them claiming the "lop and top" when the

big trees are cut. Indeed, the human touches, the human figures here and there in White's pages, add much to the interest. The glimpses we get of his own goings and comings — we wish there were more of them. We should like to know what took him to London during that great snowstorm of January, 1776, and how he got there, inasmuch as the roads were so blocked by the snow that the carriages from Bath with their fine ladies on their way to attend the Queen's birthday, were unable to get through. "The ladies fretted, and offered large rewards to labourers if they would shovel them a track to London, but the relentless heaps of snow were too bulky to be removed." The parson found the city bedded deep in snow, and so noiseless by reason of it that "it seemed to convey an uncomfortable idea of desolation."

When one reads the writers of our own day upon rural England and the wild life there, he finds that they have not the charm of the Selborne naturalist; mainly, I think, because they go out with deliberate intent to write up nature. They choose their theme; the theme does not choose them. They love the birds and flowers for the literary effects they can produce out of them. It requires no great talent to go out in the fields or woods and describe in graceful sentences what one sees there, — birds, trees, flowers, clouds, streams; but to give the atmosphere of these things, to seize the significant and interest-

ing features and to put the reader into sympathetic communication with them, that is another matter.

Hence back of all, the one thing that has told most in keeping White's book alive is undoubtedly its sound style — sentences actually filled with the living breath of a man. We are everywhere face to face with something genuine and real; objects, ideas, stand out on the page; the articulation is easy and distinct. White had no literary ambitions. His style is that of a scholar, but of a scholar devoted to natural knowledge. There was evidently something winsome and charming about the man personally, and these qualities reappear in his pages.

He was probably a parson who made as many calls afield as in the village, if not more. An old nurse in his family said of him, fifty years after his death, "He was a still, quiet body, and that there was not a bit of harm in him."

White was a type of the true observer, the man with the detective eye. He did not seek to read his own thoughts and theories into Nature, but submitted his mind to her with absolute frankness and ingenuousness. He had infinite curiosity, and delighted in nothing so much as a new fact about the birds and the wild life around him. To see the thing as it was in itself and in its relations, that was his ambition. He could resist the tendency of his own mind to believe without sufficient evidence. Apparently he wanted to fall in with the notion cur-

rent during the last century, that swallows hibernated in the mud in the bottoms of streams and ponds, but he could not gather convincing proof. It was not enough that a few belated specimens were seen in the fall lingering about such localities, or again hovering over them early in spring; or that some old grandfather had seen a man who had taken live swallows out of the mud. Produce the man and let us cross-question him, — that was White's attitude. Dr. Johnson said confidently that swallows did thus pass the winter in the mud "conglobulated into a ball," but Johnson had that literary cast of mind that prefers a picturesque statement to the exact fact. White was led astray by no literary ambition. His interest in the life of nature was truly a scientific one; he must know the fact first, and then give it to the humanities. How true it is in science, in literature, in life, that any secondary motive vitiates the result! Seek ye the kingdom of truth first, and all things shall be added.

But White seems finally to have persuaded himself that at least a few swallows passed the winter in England in a torpid state — if not in the bottom of streams or ponds, then in holes in their banks. He reasoned from analogy, though he had expressed his distrust of that mode of reasoning. If bats, insects, toads, turtles, and other creatures can thus pass the winter, why not swallows? On many different occasions, during mild days late in the fall

and early in the spring, he saw house-martins flying about; the weather suddenly changing to colder, they quickly disappeared. Bats and turtles came forth, then vanished in the same way. White finally concluded that the mystery was the same in both cases, — that the creatures were brought from their winter retreats by the warmth, only to retire to them again when it changed to cold. If he had adhered to his usual caution he would have waited for actual proof of this fact, — the finding of a torpid swallow. He made frequent search for such, but never found any.

This notion so long current about the swallows probably had its origin in two things: first, their partiality for mud as nesting material; and secondly, the habit of these birds, after they have begun to collect into flocks in midsummer, preparatory to their migrations, of passing the night in vast numbers along the margins of streams and ponds. White knew of their habits in this respect, and wanted to see in the fact presumptive evidence of the truth of the notion that, though they may not retire into the water itself, yet that they "may conceal themselves in the banks of pools and rivers during the uncomfortable months of the year." One midsummer twilight in northern Vermont I came upon hundreds of swallows — barn and cliff — settled for the night upon some low alders that grew upon the margin of a deep, still pool in the river. The bushes bent

down with them as with an over-load of fruit. This attraction for the water on the part of the swallow family is certainly a curious one, and is not easily explained.

Our sharp-eyed parson had observed that the nesting habits of birds afford a clue to their roosting habits, — that they usually pass the night in or near those places where they build their nests. Thus, the tree-builders roost in trees; the ground-builders upon the ground. I have seen our chickadee and woodpecker enter, late in the day, the cavities in decaying limbs of trees. I have seen the oriole dispose of herself for the night on the end of a maple branch where her "pendent bed and procreant cradle" was begun a few days later. In walking through the summer fields in the twilight, the vesper sparrow or the song sparrow will often start up from almost beneath one's feet. It is said that the snow-bunting will plunge beneath the snow and pass the night there. The ruffed grouse often does this, but the swallows seem to be an exception to this rule. I have seen a vast cloud of swifts take up their lodging for the night in a tall, unused chimney; but the barn swallows and the cliff and the white-bellied swallows, at least after the young have flown, appear to pass the night in the vicinity of streams. White noticed also — and here the true observer again crops out — that the fieldfare, a kind of thrush, though a tree-builder, always appears to pass the

night on the ground. "The larkers, in dragging their nets by night, frequently catch them in the wheat stubbles." He learned, as every observer sooner or later learns, to be careful of sweeping statements, — that the truth of nature is not always caught by the biggest generalizations. After speaking of the birds that dust themselves, earth their plumage — *pulveratrices*, as he calls them — he says, "As far as I can observe, many birds that dust themselves never wash, and I once thought that those birds that wash themselves would never dust; but here I find myself mistaken," and he instances the house sparrow as doing both. White seems to have been about the first writer upon natural history who observed things minutely; he saw through all those sort of sleight-o'-hand movements and ways of the birds and beasts. He held his eye firmly to the point. He saw the swallows feed their young on the wing; he saw the fern-owl, while hawking about a large oak, "put out its short leg while on the wing, and by a bend of the head deliver something into its mouth." This explained to him the use of its middle toe, "which is curiously furnished with a serrated claw." He timed the white owls feeding their young under the eaves of his church, with watch in hand. He saw them transfer the mouse they brought, from the foot to the beak, that they might have the free use of the former in ascending to the nest.

In his walks and drives about the country he was

all attention to the life about him, simply from his delight in any fresh bit of natural knowledge. His curiosity never flagged. He had naturally an alert mind. His style reflects this alertness and sensitiveness. In his earlier days he was an enthusiastic sportsman, and he carried the sportsman's trained sense and love of the chase into his natural history studies. He complained that faunists were too apt to content themselves with general terms and bare descriptions; the reason, he says, is plain, — "because all that may be done at home in a man's study; but the investigation of the life and conversation of animals is a concern of much more trouble and difficulty, and is not to be attained but by the active and inquisitive, and by those that reside much in the country." He himself had the true inquisitiveness and activity, and the loving, discriminating eye. He saw the specific marks and differences at a glance. Then, his love of these things was so well known in the neighborhood, that this kind of knowledge flowed to him from all sides. He was a magnet that attracted all the fresh natural lore about him. People brought him birds and eggs and nests, and animals or any natural curiosity, and reported to him any unusual occurrence. They loaned him the use of their eyes and ears. One day a countryman told him he had found a young fern-owl in the nest of a small bird on the ground, and that it was fed by the little bird. "I went to see this extraordinary

phenomenon, and found that it was a young cuckoo hatched in the nest of a titlark; it was become vastly too big for its nest, appearing to have its large wings extended beyond the nest,

'in tenui re
Majores pennas nido extendisse,'

and was very fierce and pugnacious, pursuing my finger, as I teased it, for many feet from the nest, and sparring, and buffeting with its wings like a gamecock. The dupe of a dam appeared at a distance, hovering about with meat in its mouth, and expressing the greatest solicitude."

He observed that the train of the peacock was really not its tail, but an entirely separate appendage. He remarked how extremely fond cats are of fish, and yet of all quadrupeds "are the least disposed towards the water." This is a curious fact to him. A neighbor of his, in ploughing late in the fall, turned a water-rat out of his hibernaculum in a field far removed from any water. The rat had laid up more than a gallon of potatoes for its winter food. This was another curious fact that set the writer speculating. His correspondent tells him of a heronry near some manor-house that excites his curiosity much. "Fourscore nests of such a bird on one tree is a rarity which I would ride half as many miles to get a sight of." Such a lively curiosity had the parson. His thirst for exact knowledge was so great

that on one occasion he took measurements of the carcass of a moose when he was probably compelled to hold his nose to finish the task. At one place he heard of a woman who professed to cure cancers by the use of toads; some of his brother clergymen believed the story, but when he came to sift the evidence he made up his mind that the woman was a fraud.

He said truly, "There is such a propensity in mankind towards deceiving and being deceived, that one cannot safely relate anything from common report, especially in print, without expressing some degree of doubt and suspicion."

The observations of hardly one man in five hundred are of any value for scientific purposes.

White had the true scientific caution, and was, as a rule, very careful to verify his statements.

Of course the science of White's time was far behind our own. The phenomenon of the weather, for instance, was not understood then as it is now. The great atmospheric waves that sweep across the continents, and the regular alternations of heat and cold, were unsuspected. White observed that cold descended from above, but he thought that thaws often originated underground, "from warm vapours which arise." He was greatly puzzled, too, when, during the severe cold of December, 1784, the thermometer fell many degrees lower in the valley bottoms than on the hills. He had not observed that the very cold

air on such occasions settles down into the valleys and fills them like water, marking the height to which it rises by a level line upon the trees or foliage. It is a wonder that his sharp eye did not detect the true source of honey dew, but it did not. He thought it proceeded from the effluvia of flowers, which, being drawn up into the sky by the warmth of the sun by day, descended again as dew by night.

When a French anatomist announced that he had discovered why the cuckoo did not hatch its own eggs, — namely, because the crop or craw of the bird was placed back of the sternum, so as to make a protuberance on the belly, — White dissected a cuckoo for himself, and, finding the fact as stated, proceeded to dissect other birds that he knew did incubate, as the fern-owl and a hawk, and finding the craw situated the same as in the cuckoo, justly charged the Frenchman with having reached an unscientific conclusion.

In his seventy-seventh letter White clearly anticipates Darwin as to the beneficial functions of earthworms in the soil, and tells farmers and gardeners that the little creatures which they look upon as their enemies are really their best friends.

White has had imitators, but no successful rivals. A work much in the spirit and manner of his famous book, called "Jesse's Gleanings in Natural History," was published fifty years later. It had some reputation in its own day, but seems to be quite forgotten

in our time. A good reader quickly sees that its pages have not the same fresh, distinctive quality as White's, not the same atmosphere of unconscious curiosity and alert interest. They are stamped with a die far less clear and individual. The field covered is the same, the facts and incidents are the same, but the medium through which we see them all is not the same.

The following extract gives a fair sample of the style: —

"The enjoyments and delights of a country life have been sung by poets in all ages, and it is our own fault if we find the country irksome, or less agreeable than a crowded metropolis. It affords many resources of a most agreeable nature, to those who seek for rational and tranquil enjoyments. A beautiful prospect, a walk by the side of a river in fine weather, in the agreeable shade of a wood or cool valley, have great charms for those who are fond of the country. We may then exclaim with Virgil, —

'O, qui me gelidis convallibus Haemi
Sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra!'"

But even the Virgilian quotation does not give it the flavor of White's pages.

X

LUCID LITERATURE

NOTHING can make up in a writer for the want of lucidity. It is one of the cardinal literary virtues. If the page is not clear, if we see through it as through a glass darkly, if there is the least blur or opacity, the work to that extent is condemned. It is a false notion that some thoughts or ideas are necessarily obscure, or complex, or involved. Ideas are what we make them. If we think obscurely, our ideas are obscure; if one's mental activity is complex, his ideas are complex. Always is the mind of the writer the medium through which we see his matter. Such a poet as George Meredith thinks obscurely. There is a large blind spot in his mind, so that at times an almost total eclipse passes over his page. Strain one's vision as one may, one cannot make out just what he is trying to say. Then there are lucid intervals — strong, telling lines; then the shadow falls again and the reader is groping in the dark. The difficulty is never innate in his subject, but is in the poet's use of language, as if at times he caught at words blindly and used them without reference to their accepted meanings, as when he says

of the skylark, "He *drinks* his hurried flight and drops." How can one adjust his mind to the notion of a bird drinking its own flight?

Or take this puzzle: —

> "Vermilion wings, by distance held
> To pause aflight while fleeting swift,
> And high aloft the pearl inshelled
> Her lucid glow in glow will lift."

Does not the reading of such lines set one's head in a whirl?

The impression of novelty can never be made by a trick in the use of language, nor can the sense of mystery be given by obscurity of expression. Veils and screens and dim lights may do it in the world of sense, but not in the world of ideas. The reader feels all the time that there is something in the way, and that he would see clearly if the writer thought clearly. Freshness and novelty are the gifts of the writer whose mind is fresh and who has lively and novel emotions in the presence of every-day things and events.

There is a sense of mystery in much of the poetry of Wordsworth and Tennyson, and in our own Emerson and Whitman, but little or none of the Meredithian blur and opacity. One may not at once catch the full meaning of Wordsworth's "Ode to Immortality," or Tennyson's "Tiresias" or "Ancient Sage," or Emerson's "Brahma," or Whitman's

"Sleep Chasings," but how transparent the language, how unequivocal the emotion, how direct and solid the expression! There is a vast difference between the impression or want of impression made by a commonplace thought veiled and hidden by ambiguity of phrase, and that made by "something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns." Great poets give us a sense of depth and height, of the far and the rare. Meredith does at times, but oftener he gives us only a sense of the dense and the foggy.

There are two reasons why we may not understand a man. In one case the fault is in him, — in his clouded and ambiguous way of thinking, such as I have already spoken of. In the other case the fault, or rather the difficulty, is in us. The man may live and move upon a different spiritual plane, he may have an atmosphere and cherish ideals that belong to another world than ours. Thus the solid men of Boston did not understand Emerson, but said their daughters did. The daughters were habitually more familiar with Emerson's ideal values than the fathers were. Thus Scott said he did not understand Wordsworth, could not follow his "abstruse ideas;" Campbell suited him better. Scott belonged to another type of mind than that of Wordsworth's, lived in another world. There was no sense of mystery in his mind, — of that haunting, elusive something which Wordsworth felt in all

outward nature. There was no religion in Scott's love of nature, and it is this probably that baffled him in Wordsworth. Both were born countrymen and equal lovers of common, rural things, but Wordsworth associated them with his spiritual and ideal joys and experiences, while Scott found in them an appeal to his copious animal spirits, and his love of sensuous beauty. Wordsworth would understand Scott much better than Scott would understand Wordsworth. The ancient poets probably would not understand the moderns nearly as well as the moderns understand the ancients. We are further along on the road of human experience.

Then, we may understand a work and not appreciate it, not respond to its appeal. Appreciation is based upon kinship. We are more in sympathy with some types of mind than with others of equal parts. The most impersonal and judicious of critics cannot escape the law of elective affinities. Some books *find* us more than others of similar merit. See how people differ, and are bound to differ, about Whitman, and it is because his aim is not merely to give the reader poetic truth disassociated from all personal qualities and traits, but to give him himself. We cannot separate the poet from the man, and if we do not respond to the man, to his type, to his quality, to his wholesale and radical democracy, we shall not respond to the poet. If we all read authors only through our taste in *belles lettres*,

through our love of literary truth, we should agree in our estimate of them according as our tastes agreed. But the feeling we bring to them is very complex. Character, predisposition, natural affinities, race traits, all play a part. We are very apt to agree about such a poet as Milton, because the personal element plays so small a part in his poetry. If we do not get poetic truth in him we do not get anything. His style is the main thing, as it is with the Greek poets. In other words, there is nothing in Milton that makes a personal appeal. One cannot conceive of any reader taking him to his heart, appropriating him, and finding his life colored and changed by him, as by some later poets. Wordsworth was a revelation to Mill; Goethe, Carlyle, Emerson, Whitman have in the same way been revelations to many readers, and for the same reason, — their intense individual point of view. Their appeal is a personal and a religious one as well as a poetic. No one who has not something of the modern pantheistic feeling toward nature will be deeply touched by Wordsworth. No one who has not felt the burden of modern problems, the decay of the old faiths, will be moved by Arnold's poetry. His "sad lucidity of soul" belongs to our age. No one who has not broken away from the old traditions in art and religion and in politics, and possessed himself emotionally of the point of view afforded by modern science, will make much of

Whitman. Without a certain mental and spiritual experience and a certain stamp of mind Emerson will not be much to you. In Poe one's sense of artistic forms and verbal melody are alone appealed to. He is more to a Frenchman than to an American. If you are ahungered for the bread of life do not go to Poe, do not go to Landor or to Milton, do not go to the current French poets. Go sooner to Goethe, to Tennyson, to Browning, to Arnold, to Whitman, — the great personal poets, the men who have spiritual and religious values as well as poetic. All the great imaginative writers of our century have felt, more or less, the stir and fever of the century, and have been its priests and prophets. The lesser poets have not felt these things. Had Poe been greater or broader he would have felt them, so would Longfellow. Neither went deep enough to touch the formative currents of our social or religious or national life. In the past the great artist has always been at ease in Zion; in our day only the lesser artists are at ease, unless we except Whitman, man of unshaken faith, who is absolutely optimistic, and whose joy and serenity come from the breadth of his vision and the depth and universality of his sympathies.

XI

"MERE LITERATURE"

IS there any justification for the phrase "mere literature" which one often hears nowadays? There is no doubt a serious sneer in it, as Professor Woodrow Wilson, in a recent "Atlantic" essay, avers; but I think the sneer is not aimed so much at literature in itself, as at certain phases of literature. Lowell has been quoted as saying that "mere scholarship is as useless as the collecting of old postage stamps;" yet at vital scholarship — scholarship that is wielded as a weapon, and that results in power — Lowell would be the last man to sneer. In all times of high literary culture and criticism, a great deal is produced that may well be called mere literature, — the result of assiduous training and stimulation of the literary faculties, — just as a great deal of art is produced that may be called mere art. Literature that is the result of the friction upon the mind of other literatures, might, with some justice, be called mere literature. That which is the result of the contact of the mind with reality is, or ought to be, of another order.

Or we may say "mere literature" as we say

"mere gentleman." Now gentlemanly qualities — refinement, good breeding, etc. — are not to be sneered at, unless they stand alone, with no man behind them; and literary qualities — style, learning, fancy, etc. — are not to be sneered at unless *they* stand alone, which is not infrequently the case. We should not apply the phrase "mere gentleman" to Washington, or Lincoln, or Wellington, though these men may have been the most thorough of gentlemen; neither should we apply the phrase "mere literature" to the works of Bacon, or Shakespeare, or Carlyle, or Dante, or Plato. The Bible is literature, but it is not mere literature. We apply the latter term to writings that have little to recommend them save their technical and artistic excellence, like the mass of current poetry and fiction. The men who have nothing to say and say it extremely well produce mere literature.

Both England and France have at the present time many excellent writers, men who possess every grace of style and charm of expression, who still give us only a momentary pleasure. They do not move us, they do not lay strong hands upon us, their works do not take hold of any great reality; they produce mere literature. Literary seriousness, literary earnestness, cannot atone for a want of manly seriousness and moral earnestness. A sensitive artistic conscience cannot make us content with a dull or obtuse moral conscience. The literary worker is

to confront reality in just as serious a mood as does the man of science, if he hopes to produce anything that rises above mere literature. The picnickers, the excursionists, the flower-gatherers of literature do not produce lasting works. The seriousness of Hawthorne was much more than a literary seriousness; the emotion of Whittier at his best is fundamental and human.

There is a passage in Amiel's "Journal" that well expresses the distinction I am aiming at. "I have been thinking a great deal of Victor Cherbuliez," he says, under date of December 4, 1876. "Perhaps his novels make up the most disputable part of his work, — they are so much wanting in simplicity, feeling, reality. And yet what knowledge, style, wit, and subtlety, — how much thought everywhere, and what mastery of language! He astonishes one; I cannot but admire him. Cherbuliez's mind is of immense range, clear-sighted, keen, full of resources; he is an Alexandrian exquisite, substituting for the feeling which makes men earnest the irony which leaves them free. Pascal would say of him, 'He has never risen from the order of thought to the order of charity.' But we must not be ungrateful. A Lucian is not worth an Augustine, but still he is a Lucian. . . . The positive element in Victor Cherbuliez's work is beauty, not goodness, nor moral or religious life."

The positive element in the enduring works is

always something more than the beautiful; it is the true, the vital, the real, as well. The beautiful is there, but the not-beautiful is there also. The world is held together, life is nourished and made strong, and power begotten, by the neutral or negatively beautiful. Works are everywhere produced that are artistically serious, but morally trifling and insincere; faultless in form, but tame and barren in spirit. We could not say this of the works of Froude or Ruskin, of Huxley or Tyndall; we cannot say it of the works of Matthew Arnold, because he had a higher purpose than to produce mere literary effects; but we can say it of most of the productions of the younger British essayists and poets. In some of them there is a mere lust of verbal forms and rhythmic lilt. In reading their poems, I soon find myself fairly gasping for breath; I seem to be trying to breathe in a vacuum, — an effect which one does not experience at all in reading Tennyson, or Browning, or Arnold. One is apt to have serious qualms in reading the prose of Walter Pater, the lust of mere style so pervades his work. Faultless workmanship, one says; and yet the best qualities of style — freshness, naturalness, simplicity — are not here. What in Victor Hugo goes far towards atoning for all his sins against art, against sanity and proportion, are his terrible moral earnestness and his psychic power. Whatever we may think of his work, we are not likely to call it "mere literature." That

masterly ubiquitous sporting and toying with the elements of life which we find in Shakespeare we shall probably never again see in letters. The stress and burden of later times do not favor it. The great soul is now too earnest, too self-conscious; life is too serious. Only light men now essay it. With so much criticism, so much knowledge, so much science, another Shakespeare is impossible. Renan says: "In order to establish those literary authorities called classic, something especially healthy and solid is necessary. Common household bread is of more value here than pastry." There can be little doubt that our best literary workers are intent upon producing something analogous to pastry, or even confectionery, — something fine, complex, highly seasoned, that tickles the taste. It is always in order to urge a return to the simple and serious, a return to nature, to works that have the wholesome and sustaining qualities of natural products, — grain, fruits, nuts, air, water.

XII

ANOTHER WORD ON EMERSON

IN one respect many of us feel toward Emerson as a wife feels toward her husband; we like to find fault with him ourselves, but it hurts us to have others do the same. He was a friend of our youth.

Though we may in a measure have outgrown him, and now find his paradoxes, his daring affirmations, his trick of overstatement and understatement less novel and stimulating than we once did, yet we cherish him in our heart of hearts.

The process of maturing, with the spirit as with the body, with man as with the various organic growths, is more or less a hardening and toughening process, — a hardening for strength and endurance. Emerson belongs to the earlier period, before the hardening has progressed far, while the grain of our thoughts is yet in the milk. He appeals to us most strongly in youth or early manhood, when we are not too critical and while we are yet full of brave and generous impulses. A little callow we may be, but buoyant and optimistic. As we grow older something seems to evaporate from him, and one returns to his pages in middle or later life as to the scene of

some youthful festival, half religious, half social, in which he took part, and the memory of which still stirs his emotions.

Emerson finally dropped the church, but he never ceased to be a clergyman. He was like a flower escaped from the garden, and finding a lodgment in an adjoining field, but which never ceased to be a garden flower. A certain sanctity and unworldliness always clung to him, — a certain remoteness from the common thoughts, aims, attractions, of everyday humanity. If he had been a better worldling he would have been a better poet, — that is, if he had had more of the feelings, passions, sympathies and thoughts of ordinary men. These things would have given him more flexibility and brought him closer to human life. Rarely, as poet or prose writer, could he speak in the tone of the people. There was always, more or less concealed, the tone of the pulpit. Mr. James expressed this idea well when he said that Emerson "had no prosaic side relating him to ordinary people."

This prosaic side is very important to the poet, or to any man who would touch and move his fellow-men. We desire our singer or teacher to be of the same flesh and blood as ourselves. Emerson was always a preacher, and his theme, by whatever name he called it, was always religion, or what he called religion, namely, the universality of the moral law.

No lover of Emerson, I imagine, would have had him other than what he was; I certainly would not. At the same time it is a pleasure to explore his limitations and see just what he was, and what he was not. He was a rare soul, probably the most astral genius in English or any other literature. His books are for young men and for those of a religious cast of mind. His signal defect as a writer, as a contributor to the world's literature, arises from this same want of sympathy with the world, — from the select, abridged, circumscribed character of his genius. He did not and could not deal with human life as Montaigne, or Bacon, or Plutarch, or Cicero did.

He was conscious of his defect in this direction, and would fain have had it otherwise. Thus he writes in his journal in 1839: "We would all be public men if we could afford it. I am wholly private; such is the poverty of my constitution. 'Heaven betrayed me to a book and wrapped me in a gown.' I have no social talent, no will, and a steady appetite for insights in any or all directions, to balance my manifold imbecilities." He even quotes approvingly the remark of some one that he "always seemed to be on stilts." "It is even so. Most of the persons whom I see in my own house I see across a gulf. I cannot go to them nor they come to me." He lacked sympathy with men. He cared nothing for persons as such, but only for the genius of humanity which they embodied, and this genius

of humanity he did not find in any sufficiency in ordinary mortals.

He writes in his journal, "I like man, but not men!" He liked ideas, but not things. He dwelt in the abstract, not in the concrete. "In the highest friendship," he says, "we form a league with the Idea of the man who stands to us in that relation — not with the actual person." And his letters, fine and eloquent as most of them are, do not read like a message from one person to another person, but from one Idea to another Idea.

Yet Emerson's leading trait is eminently American; I mean his hospitality toward the new, — the eagerness with which he sought and welcomed the new idea and the new man. Perhaps we might call it his inborn radicalism. No writer ever made such rash, such extreme statements, in the hope that some new truth might be compassed. Anything new and daring instantly challenged his attention. His face was wholly set toward the future, — the new. The past was discredited the moment it became the past. "The coming only is sacred," he said; "no truth so sublime but it may he trivial tomorrow in the light of new thoughts."

As a writer, he sought to make all the old thoughts appear trivial in the light of his audacious affirmations. He stood ready at all times to strike his colors to the man who could bring a larger generalization than his own. All his knowledge, all his opinions,

were at the mercy of the new idea. He did not tread the beaten paths, or seek truth in the logical way; he sought for it by spurts and sallies of the mind. He called himself an "experimenter," and said he did not pretend to settle anything as true or false. "I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane: I simply experiment; an endless seeker with no Past at my back." In his random, prophetic way he hits on many sublime truths — hits on them by sheer force of affirmation, like the truth of evolution, and of the correlation of forces. Indeed, there are few great thoughts current in our time that were not indicated by the bold guessing of Emerson. The fragmentary and projectile-like character of his thinking is often very effective. He spent no force upon logic, upon fortifying his position, but sent his single bullet as far and as deep as he could. Emerson's hope and confidence in the new is shown in his serious prophecy and expectancy of the coming man.

He was apparently always on the lookout for a new and greater man than had yet appeared. He was always sweeping the horizon for this strange sail. "A new person," he says, "is to me a great event, and keeps me from sleep." He met every stranger with a curious, expectant glance. He looked at you and waited for you to speak, as if the thought, that perhaps here is the man I am waiting for, was never absent from his mind. "If the com-

panions of our childhood," he says, "should turn out to be heroes, and their condition regal, it would not surprise us." But the experience of most persons, I fancy, points just the other way: we are always incredulous when told that our playmates have turned out to be heroes; just as the whole world, except the Emersons in it, are skeptical of the worth of the new idea, or of the new invention.

Emerson does not so much expound a philosophy as he celebrates a sentiment or a law. He does not inculcate a virtue, but quickens our moral sense. He does not teach a religion, but shows all nature as religious. His method is not that of the analyst; he celebrates and presents whole what others give in detail. His mind is deficient in continuity, but strong in affirmation, strong in its separate sallies and flights. He has not a definite, practical bent like Carlyle; he seldom lays his hand on any current evil or want, but rather glorifies the world as it is. He is abstract in his aim, and concrete in his methods. He fixes his eye on the star, but would make it draw his wagon.

Carlyle was like an engine tied to its iron rails, — he turned aside for nothing; Emerson was more like a sailing yacht that hovers about all shores and takes advantage of every breeze.

XIII

THOREAU'S WILDNESS

DOUBTLESS the wildest man New England has turned out since the red aborigines vacated her territory was Henry Thoreau, — a man in whom the Indian reappeared on the plane of taste and morals. One is tempted to apply to him his own lines on "Elisha Dugan," as it is very certain they fit himself much more closely than they ever did his neighbor: —

> "O man of wild habits,
> Partridges and rabbits,
> Who hast no cares,
> Only to set snares,
> Who liv'st all alone
> Close to the bone,
> And where life is sweetest
> Constantly eatest."

His whole life was a search for the wild, not only in nature but in literature, in life, in morals. The shyest and most elusive thoughts and impressions were the ones that fascinated him most, not only in his own mind, but in the minds of others. His

startling paradoxes are only one form his wildness took. He cared little for science, except as it escaped the rules and technicalities, and put him on the trail of the ideal, the transcendental. Thoreau was of French extraction; and every drop of his blood seems to have turned toward the aboriginal, as the French blood has so often done in other ways in this country. He, for the most part, despised the white man; but his enthusiasm kindled at the mention of the Indian. He envied the Indian; he coveted his knowledge, his arts, his woodcraft. He accredited him with a more "practical and vital science" than was contained in the books. "The Indian stood nearer to wild Nature than we." "It was a new light when my guide gave me Indian names for things for which I had only scientific ones before. In proportion as I understood the language, I saw them from a new point of view." And again, "The Indian's earthly life was as far off from us as Heaven is." In his "Week" he complains that our poetry is only white man's poetry. "If we could listen but for an instant to the chant of the Indian muse, we should understand why he will not exchange his savageness for civilization." Speaking of himself, he says, "I am convinced that my genius dates from an older era than the agricultural. I would at least strike my spade into the earth with such careless freedom, but accuracy, as the woodpecker his bill into a tree. There is in my

nature, methinks, a singular yearning toward all wildness." Again and again he returns to the Indian. "We talk of civilizing the Indian, but that is not the name for his improvement. By the wary independence and aloofness of his dim forest life he preserves his intercourse with his native gods, and is admitted from time to time to a rare and peculiar society with Nature. He has glances of starry recognition, to which our saloons are strangers. The steady illumination of his genius, dim only because distant, is like the faint but satisfying light of the stars compared with the dazzling but ineffectual and short-lived blaze of candles." "We would not always be soothing and taming nature, breaking the horse and the ox, but sometimes ride the horse wild, and chase the buffalo." The only relics that interest him are Indian relics. One of his regular spring recreations or occupations is the hunting of arrow-heads. He goes looking for arrow-heads as other people go berrying or botanizing. In his published journal he makes a long entry under date of March 28, 1859, about his pursuit of arrow-heads. "I spend many hours every spring," he says, "gathering the crop which the melting snow and rain have washed bare. When, at length, some island in the meadow or some sandy field elsewhere has been plowed, perhaps for rye, in the fall, I take note of it, and do not fail to repair thither as soon as the earth begins to be dry in the spring. If

the spot chances never to have been cultivated before, I am the first to gather a crop from it. The farmer little thinks that another reaps a harvest which is the fruit of his toil." He probably picked up thousands of arrow-heads. He had an eye for them. The Indian in him recognized its own.

His genius itself is arrow-like, and typical of the wild weapon he so loved,— hard, flinty, fine-grained, penetrating, winged, a flying shaft, bringing down its game with marvelous sureness. His literary art was to let fly with a kind of quick inspiration; and though his arrows sometimes go wide, yet it is always a pleasure to watch their aerial course. Indeed, Thoreau was a kind of Emersonian or transcendental red man, going about with a pocket-glass and an herbarium, instead of with a bow and a tomahawk. He appears to have been as stoical and indifferent and unsympathetic as a veritable Indian; and how he hunted without trap or gun, and fished without hook or snare! Everywhere the wild drew him. He liked the telegraph because it was a kind of æolian harp; the wind blowing upon it made wild, sweet music. He liked the railroad through his native town, because it was the wildest road he knew of: it only made deep cuts into and through the hills. "On it are no houses nor foot-travellers. The travel on it does not disturb me. The woods are left to hang over it. Though straight, it is wild

in its accompaniments, keeping all its raw edges. Even the laborers on it are not like other laborers." One day he passed a little boy in the street who had on a home-made cap of woodchuck's skin, and it completely filled his eye. He makes a delightful note about it in his journal. That was the kind of cap to have, — "a perfect little idyl, as they say." Any wild trait unexpectedly cropping out in any of the domestic animals pleased him immensely. The crab-apple was his favorite apple, because of its beauty and perfume. He perhaps never tried to ride a wild horse, but such an exploit was in keeping with his genius.

Thoreau hesitated to call himself a naturalist. That was too tame; he would perhaps have been content to have been an Indian naturalist. He says in this journal, and with much truth and force, "Man cannot afford to be a naturalist, to look at Nature directly, but only with the side of his eye. He must look through and beyond her. To look at her is as fatal as to look at the head of Medusa. It turns the man of science to stone." When he was applied to by the secretary of the Association for the Advancement of Science, at Washington, for information as to the particular branch of science he was most interested in, he confesses he was ashamed to answer for fear of exciting ridicule. But he says, "If it had been the secretary of an association of which Plato or Aristotle was the president, I should

not have hesitated to describe my studies at once and particularly." "The fact is, I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot." Indeed, what Thoreau was finally after in nature was something ulterior to science, something ulterior to poetry, something ulterior to philosophy; it was that vague something which he calls "the higher law," and which eludes all direct statement. He went to Nature as to an oracle; and though he sometimes, indeed very often, questioned her as a naturalist and a poet, yet there was always another question in his mind. He ransacked the country about Concord in all seasons and weathers, and at all times of the day and night he delved into the ground, he probed the swamps, he searched the waters, he dug into woodchuck holes, into muskrats' dens, into the retreats of the mice and squirrels; he saw every bird, heard every sound, found every wild-flower, and brought home many a fresh bit of natural history; but he was always searching for something he did not find. This search of his for the transcendental, the unfindable, the wild that will not be caught, he has set forth in a beautiful parable in "Walden:" —

"I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks, and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound, and

the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud; and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves."

XIV

NATURE IN LITERATURE

SEVERAL different kinds or phases of this thing we call Nature have at different times appeared in literature. For instance, there is the personified or deified Nature of the towering Greek bards, an expression of Nature born of wonder, fear, childish ignorance, and the tyranny of personality; the Greek was so alive himself that he made everything else alive, and so manly and human that he could see only these qualities in Nature. Or the Greek idyllic poets, whose Nature is simple and fresh like spring water, or the open air, or the taste of milk or fruit or bread. The same thing is perhaps true in a measure of Virgil's Nature. In a later class of writers and artists that arose in Italy, Nature is steeped in the faith and dogmas of the Christian Church; it is a kind of theological Nature.

In English literature there is the artificial Nature of Pope and his class, — a kind of classic liturgy repeated from the books, and as dead and hollow as fossil shells. Earlier than that, the quaint and affected Nature of the Elizabethan poets; later the

melodramatic and wild-eyed Nature of the Byronic muse; and lastly, the transmuted and spiritualized Nature of Wordsworth, which has given the prevailing tone and cast to most modern poetry. Thus, from a goddess Nature has changed to a rustic nymph, a cloistered nun, a heroine of romance, besides other characters not so definite, till she has at last become a priestess of the soul. What will be the next phase is perhaps already indicated in the poems of Walt Whitman, in which Nature is regarded mainly in the light of science, through the immense vistas opened up by astronomy and geology. This poet sees the earth as one of the orbs, and has sought to adjust his imagination to the modern problems and conditions, always taking care, however, to preserve an outlook into the highest regions.

I was much struck with a passage in Whitman's last volume, "Two Rivulets," in which he says that he has not been afraid of the charge of obscurity in his poems, "because human thought, poetry or melody, must have dim escapes and outlets, — must possess a certain fluid, aerial character, akin to space itself, obscure to those of little or no imagination, but indispensable to the highest purposes. Poetic style, when addressed to the soul, is less definite form, outline, sculpture, and becomes vista music, half-tints, and even less than half-tints." I know no ampler justification of a certain elusive quality

there is in the highest poetry — something that refuses to be tabulated or explained, and that is a stumbling-block to many readers — than is contained in these sentences.

XV

SUGGESTIVENESS

THERE is a quality that adheres to one man's writing or speaking, and not to another's, that we call suggestiveness, — something that warms and stimulates the mind of the reader or hearer, quite apart from the amount of truth or information directly conveyed.

It is a precious literary quality, not easy of definition or description. It involves quality of mind, mental and moral atmosphere, points of view, and maybe, racial elements. Not every page or every book carries latent meaning; rarely does any sentence of a writer float deeper than it shows.

Thus, of the great writers of English literature, Dr. Johnson is, to me, the least suggestive, while Bacon is one of the most suggestive. Hawthorne is undoubtedly the most suggestive of our romancers; he has the most atmosphere and the widest and most alluring horizon. Emerson is the most suggestive of our essayists, because he has the deepest ethical and prophetic background. His page is full of moral electricity, so to speak, which begets a state of electric excitement in his reader's mind. Whitman is the

most suggestive of our poets; he elaborates the least and gives us in profusion the buds and germs of poetry. A musical composer once said to me that Whitman stimulated him more than Tennyson, because he left more for him to do, — he abounded in hints and possibilities that the musician's mind eagerly seized.

This quality is not related to ambiguity of phrase or to cryptic language or to vagueness and obscurity. It goes, or may go, with perfect lucidity, as in Matthew Arnold at his best, while it is rarely present in the pages of Herbert Spencer. Spencer has great clearness and compass, but there is nothing resonant in his style, — nothing that stimulates the imagination. He is a great workman, but the metal he works in is not of the kind called precious.

The late roundabout and enigmatical style of Henry James is far less fruitful in his readers' minds than his earlier and more direct one, or than the limpid style of his compeer, Mr. Howells. The indirect and elliptical method may undoubtedly be so used as to stimulate the mind; at the same time there may be a kind of inconclusiveness and beating around the bush that is barren and wearisome. Upon the page of the great novelist there fall, more or less distinct, all the colors of the spectrum of human life; but Mr. James in his later works seems intent only upon the invisible rays of the spectrum, and his readers grope in the darkness accordingly.

SUGGESTIVENESS

In the world of experience and observation the suggestiveness of things is enhanced by veils, concealments, half lights, flowing lines. The twilight is more suggestive than the glare of noonday, a rolling field than a lawn, a winding road than a straight one. In literature perspective, indirection, understatement, side glimpses, have equal value; a vocabulary that is warm from the experience of the writer, sentences that start a multitude of images, that abound in the concrete and the specific, that shun vague generalities, — with these goes the power of suggestiveness.

Beginnings, outlines, summaries, are suggestive, while the elaborated, the highly wrought, the perfected afford us a different kind of pleasure. The art that fills and satisfies us has one excellence, and the art that stimulates and makes us ahungry has another. All beginnings in nature afford us a peculiar pleasure. The early spring with its hints and dim prophecies, the first earth odors, the first robin or song sparrow, the first furrow, the first tender skies, the first rainbow, the first wild flower, the dropping bud scales, the awakening voices in the marshes, — all these things touch and move us in a way that later developments in the season do not. What meaning, too, in the sunrise and the sunset, in the night with its stars, the sea with its tides and currents, the morning with its dews, autumn with its bounty, winter with its snows, the desert with its

sands, — in everything in the germ and in the bud, — in parasites, suckers, blights, in floods, tempests, droughts! The winged seeds carry thoughts, the falling leaves make us pause, the clinging burrs have a tongue, the pollen dust, not less than meteoric dust, conveys a hint of the method of nature.

Some things and events in our daily experience are more typical, and therefore more suggestive, than others. Thus the sower striding across the ploughed field is a walking allegory, or parable. Indeed the whole life of the husbandman, — his first-hand relation to things, his ploughing, his planting, his fertilizing, his draining, his pruning, his grafting, his uprootings, his harvestings, his separating of the wheat from the chaff, and the tares from the wheat, his fencing his field with the stones and boulders that hindered his plough or cumbered his sward, his making the wilderness blossom as the rose, — all these things are pleasant to contemplate because in them there is a story within a story, we translate the facts into higher truths.

In like manner, the shepherd with his flocks, the seaman with his compass and rudder, the potter with his clay, the weaver with his warp and woof, the sculptor with his marble, the painter with his canvas and pigments, the builder with his plans and scaffoldings, the chemist with his solvents and precipitants, the surgeon with his scalpel and antiseptics, the lawyer with his briefs, the preacher with

his text, the fisherman with his nets, — all are more or less symbolical and appeal to the imagination.

In both prose and poetry, there is the suggestiveness of language used in a vivid, imaginative way, and the suggestiveness of words redolent of human association, words of deep import, as friend, home, love, marriage.

To me Shakespeare's sonnets are the most suggestive sonnets in the language, because they so abound in words, images, allusions drawn from real life; they are the product of a mind vividly acted upon by near-by things, that uses language steeped in the common experience of mankind. The poet drew his material not from the strange and the remote, but, as it were, from the gardens and thoroughfares of life. Does not that poetry or prose work touch us the most nearly that deals with that with which we are most familiar? One thing that separates the minor poet from the major is that the thoughts and words of the minor poet are more of the nature of asides, or of the exceptional; he does not take in the common and universal; we are not familiar with the points of view that so agitate him; and he has not the power to make them real to us. I read poems every day that provoke the thought, "Well, that is all news to me. I do not know that heaven or that earth, those men or those women," — all is so shadowy, fantastic, and unreal. But when you enter the world of the great poets you find yourself upon solid

ground; the sky and the earth, and the things in them and upon them, are what you have always known, and not for a moment are you called upon to breathe in a vacuum, or to reverse your upright position to see the landscape. Dante even makes hell as tangible and real as the objects of our senses, if not more so.

Then there is the suggestiveness or kindling power of pregnant, compact sentences, — type thoughts, compendious phrases, — vital distinctions or generalizations, such as we find scattered through literature, as when De Quincey says of the Roman that he was great in the presence of man, never in the presence of nature; or his distinction between the literature of power and the literature of knowledge, or similar illuminating distinctions in the prose of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, Arnold, Goethe, Lessing. Arnold's dictum that poetry is a criticism of life, is suggestive, because it sets you thinking to verify or to disprove it. John Stuart Mill was not what one would call a suggestive writer, yet the following sentence, which Mr. Augustine Birrell has lately made use of, makes a decided ripple in one's mind: "I have learnt from experience that many false opinions may be exchanged for true ones without in the least altering the habits of mind of which false opinions are the result." In a new home writer whose first books are but a year or two old, I find deeply suggestive sentences on nearly every page.

Here are two or three of them: "In your inmost soul you are as well suited to the whole cosmical order and every part of it as to your own body. You belong here. Did you suppose that you belonged to some other world than this, or that you belonged nowhere at all, just a waif on the bosom of the eternities? . . . Conceivably He might have flung you into a world that was unrelated to you, and might have left you to be acclimated at your own risk; but you happen to know that this is not the case. You have lived here always; this is the ancestral demesne; for ages and ages you have looked out of these same windows upon the celestial landscape and the star-deeps. You are at home." "How perverse and pathetic the desires of the animals! But they all get what they ask for, — long necks and trunks, flapping ears and branching horns and corrugated hides, anything, if only they will believe in life and try." [1]

The intuitional and affirmative writers, to which class our new author belongs, and the most notable example of which, in this country, was Emerson, are, as a rule, more suggestive than the clearly demonstrating and logical writers. A challenge to the soul seems to mean more than an appeal to the reason; an audacious affirmation often irradiates the mind in a way that a logical sequence of thought does not. Science rarely suggests more than it says;

[1] *The Religion of Democracy.* By Charles Ferguson.

but in the hands of an imaginative man like Maeterlinck a certain order of facts in natural history becomes fraught with deepest meaning, as may be witnessed in his wonderful "Life of the Bee," — one of the most enchanting and poetic contributions to natural history ever made. Darwin's work upon the earthworm, and upon the cross fertilization of flowers, in the same way seems to convey more truth to the reader than is warranted by the subject.

The writer who can touch the imagination has the key, at least one key, to suggestiveness. This power often goes with a certain vagueness and indefiniteness, as in the oft-quoted lines from one of Shakespeare's sonnets: —

> "the prophetic soul
> Of the wide world dreaming on things to come;"

a very suggestive, but not a clearly intelligible passage.

Truth at the centre, straightly put, excites the mind in one way, and truth at the surface, or at the periphery of the circle, indirectly put, excites it in another way and for other reasons; just as a light in a dark place, which illuminates, appeals to the eye in a different way from the light of day falling through vapors or colored glass, wherein objects become softened and illusory.

A common word may be so used as to have an

unexpected richness of meaning, as when Coleridge speaks of those books that "find" us; or Shakespeare of the "marriage of true minds," or Whitman of the autumn apple hanging "indolent-ripe" on the tree. Probably that language is the most suggestive that is the most concrete, that is drawn most largely from the experience of life, that savors of real things. The Saxon English of Walton or Barrow is more suggestive than the latinized English of Johnson or Gibbon.

Indeed, the quality I am speaking of is quite exceptional in the eighteenth-century writers. It is much more abundant in the writers of the seventeenth century. It goes much more with the vernacular style, the homely style, than with the polished academic style.

With the stream of English literature of the nineteenth century has mingled a current of German thought and mysticism, and this has greatly heightened its power of suggestiveness both in poetry and in prose. It is not in Byron or Scott or Campbell or Moore or Macaulay or Irving, but it is in Wordsworth and Coleridge and Landor and Carlyle and Ruskin and Blake and Tennyson and Browning and Emerson and Whitman, — a depth and richness of spiritual and emotional background that the wits of Pope's and Johnson's times knew not of. It seems as if the subconscious self played a much greater part in the literature of the nineteenth century than

of the eighteenth, probably because this term has been recently added to our psychology.

As a rule it may be said that the more a writer condenses, the more suggestive his work will be. There is a sort of mechanical equivalent between the force expended in compacting a sentence and the force or stimulus it imparts again to the reader's mind. A diffuse writer is rarely or never a suggestive one. Poetry is, or should be, more suggestive than prose, because it is the result of a more compendious and sublimating process. The mind of the poet is more tense, he uses language under greater pressure of emotion than the prose writer, whose medium of expression gives his mind more play-room. The poet often succeeds in focusing his meaning or emotion in a single epithet, and he alone gives us the resounding, unforgettable line. There are pregnant sentences in all the great prose writers; there are immortal lines only in the poets.

Whitman said the word he would himself use as most truly descriptive of his "Leaves of Grass" was the word suggestiveness. "I round and finish little, if anything; and could not consistently with my scheme. The reader will always have his or her part to do, just as much as I have had mine. I seek less to state or display my theme or thought, and more to bring you, reader, into the atmosphere of the theme or thought — there to pursue your own

flight." These sentences themselves are suggestive, because they bring before the mind a variety of definite actions, as finishing a thing, displaying a thing, doing your part, pursuing your own flight, and yet the idea conveyed has a certain subtlety and elusiveness. The suggestiveness of his work as a whole probably lies in its blending of realism and mysticism, and in the art of it running parallel to or in some way tallying with the laws and processes of nature. It stimulates thought and criticism as few modern works do.

Of course the suggestiveness of any work — poem, picture, novel, essay — depends largely upon what we bring to it; whether we bring a kindred spirit or an alien one, a full mind or an empty one, an alert sense or a dull one. If you have been there, so to speak, if you have passed through the experience described, if you have known the people portrayed, if you have thought, or tried to think, the thoughts the author exploits, the work will have a deeper meaning to you than to one who is a stranger to these things. The best books make us acquainted with our own, — they help us to find ourselves. No book calls forth the same responses from two different types of mind. The wind does not awaken æolian-harp tones from cornstalks. No man is a hero to his valet. It is the deep hollows and passes of the mountains that give back your voice in prolonged reverberations. The tides are in the sea, not

in the lakes and ponds. Words of deep import do not mean much to a child. The world of books is under the same law as these things. What any given work yields us depends largely upon what we bring to it.

XVI

ON THE RE-READING OF BOOKS

AFTER one has passed the middle period of life, or even long before that, it is interesting to note what books he spontaneously recurs to and re-reads. Do his old favorites retain anything of their first freshness and stimulus for him, or have they become stale and trite, or completely outgrown? On taking down for the third or fourth time a favorite author the present winter, I said to myself, "There is no test of a book like that: can we, and do we, go back to it?" If not, is it at all probable that future generations will go back to it? One's own experience may be looked upon as the experience of the race in miniature. If one cannot return to an author again and again, is it not pretty good evidence that his work has not the keeping qualities? One brings a different self, a different experience, to each re-reading, and thus in a measure brings the test of time and humanity. Yet there is always some difficulty in going back. It is difficult to go back, after some years, to live in a place from which one has once flitted. Somehow things look stale to us. Is it our dead selves that we encounter at every turn?

Even the old homestead has a certain empty, pathetic, forlorn look. In the journey of life there is always more or less pain in going back; and I suppose it is partly because in every place in which we have lived we have had pain, and partly because there is some innate dislike in us to going back; the watchword of the soul is onward. If the book has given us pain, we cannot return to it; and our second or third or fourth pleasure in it will be in proportion to the depth and genuineness of our first. If our pleasure was in the novelty or strangeness or unexpectedness of the thing, it will not return, or only in small measure. Stories of exciting plots, I find, one can seldom re-read. One can go back to the "Vicar of Wakefield;" but can he read a second time "The Woman in White"? In such books there can be only one first time. Pluck out the heart of a mystery once, and it never grows again. Curiosity and astonishment make a poor foundation to build upon. The boy tires of his jumping-jack much sooner than of his top or ball. Only the normal, the sane, the simple, have the gift of long life; the strained, the intemperate, the violent will not live out half their days. We never outgrow our pleasure in simple, common things; if we do, so much the worse for us; and I think it will be found that those books to which we return and that stand the test of time have just this quality of simple, universal, every-day objects and experiences, with, of

course, some glint of that light that never was on sea or land, — the light of the spirit. How many times does a reading man return to Montaigne, not to make a dead set at him, but to dip into him here and there, as one takes a cup of water from a spring! Human nature is essentially the same in all ages; and Montaigne put so much of his genuine, unaffected self into his pages, and put it with such vivacity of style, that all men find their own in his book; it is forever modern. We return to Bacon for a different reason, — the breadth and excellence of his wisdom, and his masterly phrases. The excellent is always modern; only, what is excellent?

A man of my own tastes re-reads Gilbert White two or three times, and dips into him many times more. It is easy to see why such a book lasts. So much writing there is that is like half-live coals buried in ashes; but here there are no ashes, no dead verbiage at all; we are in immediate contact with a live, simple, unaffected mind and personality. But this general description applies to all books that last; they all have at least one quality in common, living reality. What is special to White is his fine, scholarly style, busied with the common, homely things of every-day country life. The facts are just enough heightened and related to the life of this man to make them of perennial interest.

We probably go back to books from two motives: one, because we want to recover some past mood or

experience to which the book may be the key; and the other from the perennial sources of pleasure and profit which a good book holds; in other words for association and inspiration.

I suppose it was with some such motives as these that I recently opened the "Autocrat" after the pages had been closed to me for over a quarter of a century. To recover as far as possible the spirit of the old days, I got out the identical numbers of the "Atlantic" in which I had first read those sparkling sentences. Life to me had the freshness and buoyancy of the morning hours in those first years of the great Boston magazine. I recall how impatiently I waited for each number to appear, and how, on one occasion at least, I ran all the way home from the post-office with the new issue in my hand, so eager was I to be alone with it in my room. I remember, too, how I resented the criticism of a schoolmate, then at Harvard College, who said that Holmes was not the great writer I fancied him to be, but only a *Boston* great writer.

Well, I found places in the "Autocrat" that would not bear much pressure, — thin places where a lively rhetoric alone carried the mind over. And I found much that was sound and solid, that would not give way beneath one under any pressure he could bring.

When Dr. Holmes got hold of a real idea, as he often did, he could exploit it in as taking a way as any man who has lived; but frequently, I think, he

got hold of sham or counterfeit ideas; and these, with all his skill in managing them, will not stand the pressure of time. (His classing poems with meerschaum pipes, as two things that improve with use, is an instance of what I mean by his sham ideas.)

As a writer Dr. Holmes always reminded me of certain of our bird songsters, such as the brown thrasher or the catbird, whose performances always seem to imply a spectator and to challenge his admiration. The vivacious doctor always seemed to write with his eye upon his reader, and to calculate in advance upon his reader's surprise and pleasure. If the world finally neglects his work, it will probably be because it lacks the deep seriousness of the enduring productions.

Yet this test of re-reading is, of course, only an approximate one. So great an authority as Hume said it was sufficient to read Cowley once, but that Parnell after the fiftieth reading was as fresh as at the first. Now, for my part, I have to go to the encyclopædia to find out who Parnell was, but of Cowley even desultory readers like myself know something. His essays one can not only read, but reread. They make one of the unpretentious minor books that one can put in his pocket and take with him on a walk to the woods, and nibble at under a tree or by a waterfall. Solitude seems to bring out its quality, as it does that of some people.

In our intellectual experience there can probably

be but one first time. We go back to an author again and again; yet in all save a few exceptional cases, the pleasure of the second or third reading is only a lesser degree of the first. On the other hand, a favorite piece of music one may hear with the same keen delight any number of times. Is it because music is so largely made up of the sensuous, at least to a greater extent than is any other phase of art? It is the same with perfumes, flavors, colors: they never lose their first freshness to us. But a book or a poem we absorb and exhaust more or less, — that is, as to its intellectual content; and if we return to it, it is probably for some charm or quality that is to the spirit what music or perfume or color is to the senses, or what a congenial companion is to our social instincts. We shall not go back to a book that does not in some way, apart from its mere intellectual service, relate itself to our lives.

Time tries all things, and surely does it sift out the false and fugitive in books. Contemporary judgment is usually unreliable. It is like trial by jury, the local and accidental play so large a part in the verdict. The next age, or the next, forms the higher court of appeal. In the same way a man's future self corrects or sets aside his verdict of to-day. If in later life he reaffirms his first opinion, the chances are that time is on his side. There is, of course, a sense or a degree in which any book that one has once read becomes a sucked orange; but some books

become much more so than others. I doubt if many of us find books that, like a few people, become dearer to us as time passes, and to which we always return with increasing interest. And the reason is that one's mental and spiritual outlook is not uniformly the same, while his social and human wants, such as his need of food and warmth, do remain about the same. One in a measure absorbs the book and puts it behind him. It is like a place he has visited: he has had the view, and until the impression is more or less obliterated he does not care to repeat it. But one's friend is always a fresh stimulus: he keeps the past alive for him (which the book can also do in a measure), and he consecrates the present (which the book cannot do). Indeed, the sense of companionship which one can have in a book is but a faint echo or shadow of the companionship he has with persons. Yet this sense of companionship does adhere to some books much more vividly than to others. They are our books; they were written for us; they become a part of our lives, and they do not drop away from us with the lapse of time, as do others. Different readers have felt this way about such writers as Emerson, Carlyle, Wordsworth, and Whitman: but it may be a question how writers who make the intense personal appeal that these men make will wear. Are they too special and individual for future generations to recognize close kinship with? Will each age have its own doctors and

saviors, and go back only for lovers and for the touch of nature that makes all the world kin? I know not; yet it is apparent that he who stands upon the common ground where all men stand, and by the magic of his genius makes poetry and romance out of that, has the best chance to endure. Only so far as the writers named, or any writers, represent states of mind and spirit that are likely to return again and again, and not to be outgrown in the progress of the race, are we likely to come back to them, or is the future likely to feel an interest in them. A path or road becomes obsolete when there are no more travelers going that way; and an author becomes obsolete when there are no more readers going *his* way.

For my part, I find myself returning again and again to the works of the men named, but, of course, with the cooled ardor that years bring to every man. I feel that I am less near the end with Whitman than with any of the others; he is the most stimulating to my intellect, because he suggests the most far-reaching problems. I re-read Wordsworth as I walk again along familiar paths that lead to the sequestered and the idyllic. I climb the Whitman mountain when I want a big view, and a wide horizon, and a glimpse of the unknown.

I think the service most of us get from Carlyle is a moral rather than an intellectual one. He was to his generation more like a much-needed drastic tonic

remedy than like a simple hygienic regimen; we get the virtue of him now in a thousand ways without re-reading him. Hence there are more chances of our outgrowing him than of our outgrowing some lesser but more normal men. In a measure, I think, this is true of Emerson, but not entirely so. Emerson has charm; he has illusion; he has the witchery of the ideal. He is like the wise doctor whose presence, whose reassuring smile, and whose cheerful prognosis do more for the patient than anything else. We want him to come again and again. To re-read his first essays, his "Representative Men," his "English Traits," and many of his poems, is again to hear music, to breathe perfume, or to walk in a spring twilight when the evening star throbs above the hill.

One winter night I tried to re-read Carlyle's "Past and Present" and certain of his "Latter-Day Pamphlets;" but I found I could not, and thanked my stars that I did not have to. It was like riding a spirited but bony horse bareback. There was tremendous "go" in the beast; but oh, the bruises from those knotty and knuckle-like sentences! But the "Life of Sterling" I have found I can re-read with delight; it has a noble music. Certain of the essays, also, such as the ones on Scott, Burns, and Johnson, have a perennial quality. Parts of "Frederick" I mean to read again, and the "Reminiscences." I have re-read "Sartor Resartus," but it

was a task, hardly a pleasure. Nearly four fifths of the book, I should say, is chaff; but the other fifth is real wheat, if you are not choked in getting it. Yet I have just read the story of an educated tramp who carried the book in his blanket thousands of miles and knew it nearly by heart. Carlyle wrote as he talked; his "Latter-Day Pamphlets" are harangues that it would have been a delight to hear, but in the printed page we miss the guiding tone and emphasis, and above all do we miss the laugh that mollified the bitter words. One can stand, or even welcome, in life what may be intolerable in print; put the same thing in a book, and it is the pudding without the sauce, and cold at that. The colloquial style is good, or the best, if perfectly easy and simple. In reading aloud we teach our children to read as they speak, and thus make the words their own. The same thing holds in writing; the less formal, the less *written*, the sentences are, or the more they are like familiar speech, the more genuine and real the writing seems, the more it becomes one's own; but when the form and manner of spoken sentences are very pronounced, they become tiresome when transferred to print. Carlyle will doubtless hold his place in English literature, but he is terribly handicapped in some of his books by his crabbed, raw-boned style.

What reading man does not re-read Boswell's "Johnson" two or three times in the course of his life? The charm of this is that it is so much like

the spoken word, and so filled with the presence of the living man. Another volume of a similar kind, which I have read three times and dipped into any number of times, is Eckermann's "Conversations with Goethe." It is a pregnant book; in fact, I know no such armory of critical wisdom anywhere else as this book contains. Its human interest may not be equal to Boswell, though I find this very great; but as an intellectual excitant it is vastly superior.

It is a profitable experience for one who read Dickens forty years ago to try to read him now. Last winter I forced myself through the "Tale of Two Cities." It was a sheer dead pull from start to finish. It all seemed so insincere, such a transparent make-believe, a mere piece of acting. My sympathies were hardly once touched. I was not insensible to the marvelous genius displayed in the story, but it left me cold and unmoved. A feeling of unreality haunted me on every page. The fault may have been my own. I give myself reluctantly to a novel, yet I love to be entirely mastered by one. But my poor success with this one, of course, makes me think that Dickens's hold upon the future is not at all secure. A man of wonderful talents, but of no deep seriousness; a matchless mimic through and through, and nothing else. But I am proud to add that my boy, a youth of eighteen, reads his books with great enthusiasm.

Natural, irrepressible humor is always welcome; but the humor of the grotesque, the exaggerated, the distorted, is like a fashion in dress: it has its day. How surely we tire of the loud, the too pronounced, the merely peculiar, whether it be in carpets and wall-papers, or in books and art! The common, the average, the universal, quickened with a new spirit, imbued with a vernal freshness — that is the stuff of enduring works.

One often wonders what is the secret of the vitality of such a book as Dana's "Two Years before the Mast." Each succeeding generation reads it with the same pleasure. I can myself re-read it every ten or a dozen years. Parkman's "Oregon Trail" has much of the same perennial charm as has Franklin's autobiography.

How far perfect seriousness and good faith carry in literature! Why should they not count for just as much here as in life? They count in anything. The least bit of acting and pretense, and the words ring false. The effort of the writer of books like "Two Years before the Mast" is always entirely serious and truthful; his eye is single; he has no vanities to display before the reader. Compare this book with such a record as Stevenson's "Inland Voyage" or his "Travels with a Donkey." Here the effort is mainly literary, and we get the stimulus of words rather than of things; we are one remove more from reality.

General Grant's "Memoirs," I think, are likely to last, because of their deep seriousness and good faith. The effort here is not a literary one, but a real one. The writer is not occupied with his manner, but with his matter. Had Grant had any literary vanity or ambition, is it at all probable that his narrative would cleave to us as it does? The near presence of death would probably cure any man of his vanity, if he had any; but Grant never had any.

I have always felt that Tennyson's famous poem "Crossing the Bar" did not ring quite true, because it was not conceived in a spirit serious enough for the occasion. The poetic effort is too obvious; the pride of the verse is too noticeable; it bedecks itself with pretty fancies. The last solemn strain of Whitman, wherein he welcomes death as the right hand of God, strikes a far deeper chord, I think. As in the Biblical writers, the literary effort is entirely lost in the religious faith and fervor. We do not want a thing too much written; in fact, we do not want it written at all, but spoken directly from the heart. It is in this respect that I think Wordsworth's poetry, at its best, is better than Tennyson's. It is more inevitable; it wrote itself; the poetic intention is not so obvious; the art of the singer is more completely effaced by his inspiration.

There are probably few readers of the critical literature of the times who do not recur again and

again to Matthew Arnold's criticism, not only for the charm of the style, but for the currents of vital thought which it holds. One may not always agree with Arnold, but for that very reason one will go back to see how it is possible to differ from a man who sees so clearly and feels so justly. Of course, Arnold's view is not final, any more than is that of any other man; but it is always fit, and challenges your common sense. After the muddle and puddle of most literary criticism, the reader of Arnold feels like a traveler who has got out of the confusion of brush and bog into clean and clear open spaces, where the ground is firm, and where he can see his course.

> "Where'er the trees grow biggest,
> Huntsmen find the easiest way,"

says Emerson, and for a similar reason the way is always easy and inviting through Arnold's pages.

But his theological criticism has less charm; and, for my part, I doubt if it will survive. I once seriously tried to re-read his "Literature and Dogma," but stuck before I had got halfway through it. I suppose I found too much dogma in it. Arnold makes a dogma out of what he calls the "method and secret of Jesus," his "method of *inwardness*" and "*secret of self-renunciation;*" he iterates and reiterates these phrases till one never wants to hear them again. Arnold's besetting sin of giving a quasi-

scientific value to certain literary terms here has free rein, and one finds only a new kind of inflexibility in place of the one he condemns. Sir Thomas Browne directed a free play of mind upon the old dogmas, and the result was the "Religio Medici," a work which each generation treasures and re-reads, not because of the dogma, but because of the literature; it is a rare specimen of vital, flexible, imaginative writing. It is full of soul, like Emerson's "Divinity School Address," which sought to dissolve certain of the old dogmas. In both these authors we are made free as the spirit makes free; but in Arnold's criticism we are made free only as a liberal Anglicanism makes free, which is not much.

The books that we do not like to part with after we have read them, that we like to keep near us, — like Amiel's "Journal," say, — are probably the books that our children's children will like to have around. A Western woman once paid an Eastern author this rare compliment. "Most of the new books," she said, "we see at the public library; but your books we always buy, because we like to have them in the house." Probably it is the personal element in a book, the quality of the writer, that alone endears it to us. If we could not love the man, is it probable that we can love his book?

Of our New England poets, I find myself taking down Emerson oftener than any other; then Bryant;

occasionally Longfellow for a few poems; then Whittier for "The Playmate" or "Snow-bound;" and least of all, Lowell. I am not so vain as to think that the measure of my appreciation of these poets is the measure of their merit; but as this writing is so largely autobiographical, I must keep to the facts. As the pathos and solemnity of life deepen with time, I think one finds only stray poems, or parts of poems, in the New England anthology that adequately voice them; and these he finds in Emerson more plentifully than anywhere else, though in certain of Longfellow's sonnets there is adequacy also. The one on "Sumner," beginning, —

> River, that stealest with such silent pace,

easily fixed itself in my mind.

I think we go back to books not so much for the amount of pleasure we have had in them, as the kind of pleasure. There is a pleasure both in books and in life that is inconsistent with health and wholeness, and there is a pleasure that is consistent with these things. The instinct of self-preservation makes us cleave to the latter. I do not think we go back to the exciting books, — they do not usually leave a good taste in the mouth; neither to the dull books, which leave no taste at all in the mouth; but to the quiet, mildly tonic and stimulating books, — books that have the virtues of sanity and good nature, and that keep faith with us.

At any rate, an enduring fame is of slow growth. The man of the moment is rarely the man of the eternities. If your name is upon all men's tongues to-day, some other name is likely to be there to-morrow.

XVII

THE SPELL OF THE PAST

I NOTICE that as a man grows old he is more and more fond of quoting his father, — what he said, what he did. It has more and more force or authority with him. It is a tribute to the past. Not until one has reached the meridian of life or gone beyond it, does the spell of the past begin to creep over him.

Said a middle-aged woman to me the other day, "Old people are beginning to look very good to me; I like to be near them and to hear them talk." It is a common experience. I have seen many a granny on the street whom I felt like kidnapping, taking home, and seating in my chimney corner, for the sake of the fragrance and pathos of the past which hovered about her; for the sake also, I suppose, of the filial yearning which is pretty sure to revive in one after a certain time.

No woman can ever know the depths of her love for her mother until she has become a mother herself, and no man knows the depths of his love for his father until he has become a father. When we have experienced what they experienced, when we

have traveled over the road which they traveled over, they assume a new value, a new sacredness in our eyes. They are then our former selves, and a peculiarly tender regard for them awakens in our hearts. There is pathos in the fact that so many people lose their parents before the experiences of life have brought about that final flavoring and ripening of the filial instinct to which I refer.

After one has lived half a century, and maybe long before, his watch begins to lose time; the years come faster than he is ready for them; while he is yet occupied with the old the new is upon him. How alien and unfriendly seem the new years, strangers whom we reluctantly entertain for a time but with whom we seem hardly to get on speaking terms, — with what uncivil haste they come rushing in! One writes down the figures on his letters or in his journals, but they all seem alien; before one has become at all intimate with them, so that they come to mean anything special to him, they are gone. While he is yet occupied with the sixties, living upon the thoughts and experiences which they brought him, the seventies have come and gone and the eighties have knocked at his door.

The earlier years one took to his heart as he did his early friends. How much we made of them; what varied hues and aspects they wore; how we came to know each other; how rounded and complete were all things! Ah, the old friends and the old years,

we cannot separate them; they had a quality and an affinity for us that we cannot find in the new. The new years and the new friends come and go, and leave no impression. Youth makes all the world plastic; it creates all things anew; youth is Adam in Paradise, from which the burdens and the experiences of manhood will by and by cause him to depart with longing and sorrow. "When we were young," says Schopenhauer, "we were completely absorbed in our immediate surroundings; there was nothing to distract our attention from them; we looked upon the objects about us as though they were the only ones of their kind, — as though, indeed, nothing else existed at all."

It is perhaps inevitable that a man of sensibility and imagination should grow conservative as he grows old. The new is more and more distasteful to him. Did you ever go back to the old homestead where you had passed your youth or your early manhood, and find the old house, the old barn, the old orchard, in fact all the old landmarks gone? What a desecration, you thought. The new buildings, how hateful they look to you! They mean nothing to you but the obliteration of that which meant so much. This experience proves nothing except that the past becomes a part of our very selves; our roots, our beginnings, are there, and we bleed when old things are cut away.

After a certain age is reached, how trivial and

flitting seem the new generations! The people whom we found upon the stage when we came into the world, — the middle-aged and the elderly people who were bearing the brunt of the battle, — they seem important and like a part of the natural system of things. When they pass away what a void they leave! Those who take their places, the new set, do not seem to fill the bill at all. But the chances are that they are essentially the same class of people, and will seem as permanent and important to our children as the old people did to us.

To repeat the experience, go to a strange town and take up your abode. Everybody seems in his proper place, there are no breaks, we miss nothing, the social structure is complete. In a quarter of a century go back to the place again; ruins everywhere, nearly all the old landmarks gone, and a new generation upon the stage. But to the newcomer nothing of this is visible; he finds everything established and in order as we first found it. It is so in life. Our children are the newcomers who do not and cannot go behind the visible scene.

We are always wondering who are going to take the place of the great poets, the great preachers, the great statesmen and orators who are passing away. We see the new men, but they are not the worthy successors of these. The great ones are all old or dead. The new ones we know not; they cannot be to us what the others were; they cannot be the star

actors in the drama in which we have played a part, and therefore we fancy they are of little account.

Are there any genuine old men any more? Why, the old men, the real ones, are all dead long ago; we knew them in our youth; they were always old, old from the foundations of the world. These old men of to-day are mere imitations; we can remember when they were not old, — it is all put on. The grandfathers and the grandmothers whom we knew — think of any present-day grandparents being anything more than mere counterfeits of them!

Hence, also, the new generation always go astray according to the old, and run after strange gods. "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel."

How ready we are to believe in the past as against the present; to believe that wonders happened then that do not happen now! Miracles happened then, but not now. The Divine One came upon earth then, but he comes no more! Our whole religion is of the past. How hard to believe in a present revelation, or to believe in the advantages and opportunities of the present hour!

From the standpoint of each of us the sunrise and the sunset seem like universal facts; it must be evening or morning throughout the world, we think, instead of just here on our meridian. In the same

way we are prone to look upon youth and age as commensurate with human existence; the world was young when we were young, and it grows old as we grow old; youth and age we think are not subjective experiences, but objective realities.

How can these youths here by our side feel as we have felt, see what we have seen, have the same joys and sorrows, the same friends, the same experiences, see the world clad in the same hues, feel the same ties of home, of father and mother, of school and comrades, when all the world is so changed, — when these things and persons that were so much to us are forever past? What is there left? How can life bring to them what it brought to us? But it will. The same story is told over and over to each succeeding generation, and each finds it new and true for them alone. As we find our past in others, so our youths will find their past in us, and find it unique and peculiar.

The lives of men are like the sparks that shoot upward; the same in the first ages as in the last, each blazing its brief moment as it leaps forth, some attaining a greater brilliancy or a higher flight than others, but all ending at last in the same black obscurity. Or they are like the waves that break upon the shore; one generation following swift upon the course of another, repeating the same evolutions, and crumbling and vanishing in the same way.

Probably no man ever lost his father or his mother

or his bosom friend without feeling that no one else could ever have had just such an experience. Carlyle, in writing to Emerson shortly after each had lost his mother, said, "You too have lost your good old mother, who stayed with you like mine, clear to the last; alas, alas, it is the oldest Law of Nature; and it comes on every one of us with a strange originality, as if it had never happened before!"

Speaking of these two rare men, each so attractive to the other, how unlike they were in their attitude toward the past, — the one with that yearning, wistful, backward glance, bearing the burden of an Old World sorrow and remorse, long generations of baffled, repressed, struggling humanity coming to full consciousness in him; the other serene, hopeful, optimistic, with the spell of the New World upon him, turning cheerfully and confidently to the future! Emerson describes himself as an endless seeker with no past at his back. He seemed to have no regrets, no wistful retrospections. His mood is affirmative and expectant. The power of the past was not upon him, but it had laid its hand heavily upon his British brother, so heavily that at times it almost overpowered him. Carlyle's dominant note is distinctively that of retrospection. He yearns for the old days. The dead call to him from their graves. In the present he sees little, from the future he expects less; all is in the past. How he magnifies it, how he recreates it and reads his own heroic temper into it!

The twelfth century is more to him than the nineteenth.

It is true that the present time is more or less prosy, vulgar, commonplace to most men; not till we have lived it and colored it with our own experiences does it begin to draw us. This seems to have been preëminently the case with Carlyle; he was morbidly sensitive to the crude and prosy present, and almost preternaturally alive to the glamour of the past. What men had done, what they had touched with their hands, what they had colored with their lives, that was sacred to him.

Is it not a common experience that as we grow old there comes more and more a sense of solitude and exposure? Life does not shut us in and house us as it used to do. One by one the barriers and wind-breaks are taken down, and we become more and more conscious of the great cosmic void that encompasses us. Our friends were walls that shielded us; see the gaps in their ranks now. Our parents were like the roof over our heads; what a sense of shelter they gave us! Then our hopes, our enthusiasms, how they housed us, or peopled and warmed the void! A keen living interest in things, what an armor against the shafts of time is that! Always on the extreme verge of time, this moment that now passes is the latest moment of all the eternities. *New* time always. The old time we cannot keep. The old house, the old fields, and in

a measure the old friends may be ours, but the atmosphere that bathed them all, the sentiment that gave to them hue, this is from within and cannot be kept.

Time does not become sacred to us until we have lived it, until it has passed over us and taken with it a part of ourselves. While it is here we value it not, — it is like raw material not yet woven into the texture and pattern of our lives; but the instant it is gone and becomes yesterday, or last spring, or last year, how tender and pathetic it looks to us! The shore of time! I think of it as a shore constantly pushing out into the infinite sea, stretching farther and farther back of us like a fair land idealized by distance into which we may not again enter. The future is alien and unknown, but the past is a part of ourselves. So many ties bind us to it. The past is the cemetery of our days. There they lie, every one of them. Musingly we recall their faces and the gifts they brought us, — the friends, the thoughts, the experiences, the joys, the sorrows; many of them we have quite forgotten, but they were all dear to us once.

If our friends should come back from their graves, could they be what they once were to us? Not unless our dead selves came back also. How precious and pathetic the thought of father and mother to all men; yet the enchantment of the past is over them also. They are in that sacred land; their faces shine

with its hallowed light, their voices come to us with its moving tones.

Pope in replying to a letter of Swift's said, "You ask me if I have got a supply of new friends to make up for those who are gone? I think that impossible; for not our friends only, but so much of ourselves is gone by the mere flux and course of years, that, were the same friends restored to us, we could not be restored to ourselves to enjoy them."

In view of this power and attraction of the past, what do we mean by saying we would not live our lives over again? It seems to be an almost universal feeling. Cicero says, "If any god should grant me, that from this period of life I should become a child again and cry in the cradle, I should earnestly refuse it;" and Sir Thomas Browne says, "For my own part I would not live over my hours past, or begin again the thread of my days." Sir Thomas did not want to live his life over again, for fear he would live it worse instead of better. Cicero did not regret that he had lived, but intimates that he had had enough of this life, and wanted to enter upon that new and larger existence. "Oh, glorious day! when I shall depart to that divine company and assemblage of spirits, and quit this troubled and polluted scene!"

But probably the true reason was not given in either case. *We do not like to go back.* We are done with the past; we have dropped it, sloughed it off.

However pleasing it may be in the retrospect, however fondly we may dwell upon it, our real interest is in the present and the future. Probably no man regrets that he did not live at an earlier period, one hundred, five hundred, two thousand years ago; while the wish that our existence had been deferred to some future age is quite common. It all springs from this instinctive dislike to going back, and this zest for the unknown, the untried. There are many experiences in the lives of us all that we would like to repeat, but we do not want to go back. We habitually look upon life as a journey; the past is the road over which we have just come; these were fair countries we just passed through, delightful experiences we had at this point and at that, but we do not want to turn back and retrace our steps. There is more or less a feeling of satiety. We want to go ahead, but of what is behind us we have had our fill. What is the feeling we have when we meet a crowd pressing into the show as we are coming out, or when we see our eager friends embarking for Europe as we again set foot on our native shore? Do we not have a kind of pity for them? Do we not feel that we have taken the cream and that they will find only the skimmed milk? We think of the world as moving on, everybody and everything as pressing forward. To live our lives over again would be to go far to the rear. It would be to give up the present and all that it holds; it would be a kind of death.

Take from life all novelty, newness, surprise, hope, expectation, and what have you left? Nothing but a cold pancake, which even the dog hesitates over. One's life is full of routine and repetition, but then it is always a new day; it is always the latest time; we are on the crest of the foremost wave; we are perpetually entering a new and untried land. I am told that lecturers do not weary of repeating the same lecture over and over, because they always have a new audience. The routine of our lives is endurable because, as it were, we always have a new audience; this day is the last birth of time and its face no man has before seen. Life becomes stale to us when we cease to feel any interest in the new day, when the night does not re-create us, when we are not in some measure born afresh each morning. As age comes on we become less and less capable of renewal by rest and sleep, and so gradually life loses its relish, till it is liable to become a positive weariness.

Hence in saying we would not live our lives over, we are only emphasizing this reluctance we feel at going back, at taking up again what we have finished and laid down. Time translates itself in the mind as space; our earlier lives seem afar off, to be reached only by retracing our steps, and this we are not willing to do. In the only sense in which we can live our lives over, namely, in the lives of our children, we live them over again very gladly. We begin the game again with the old zest.

THE SPELL OF THE PAST

Who would not have his youth renewed? What old man would not have again, if he could, the vigor and elasticity of his prime? But we would not go back for them; we would have them here and now, and date the new lease from this moment. It argues no distaste for life, therefore, no deep dissatisfaction with it, to say we would not live our lives over again. We do live them over again from day to day, and from year to year; but the shadow of the past, we would not enter that. Why is it a shadow? Why this pathos of the days that are gone? Is it because, as Schopenhauer insists, life has more pain than pleasure? But it is all beautiful, the painful experiences as well as the pleasurable ones; it is all bathed in a light that never was on sea or land, and yet we see it as it were through a mist of tears. There is no pathos in the future, or in the present; but in the house of memory there are more sighs than laughter.

XVIII

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

ABOUT the pursuit of happiness, how often I say to myself, that considering life as a whole, the most one ought to expect is a kind of negative happiness, a neutral state, the absence of acute or positive unhappiness. Neutral tints make up the great background of nature, and why not of life? Neutral tints wear best in anything. We do not tire of them. How much even in the best books is of a negative or neutral character, — a background upon which the positive beauty is projected. A kind of tranquil, wholesome indifference, with now and then a dash of positive joy, is the best of the common lot. To be consciously and positively happy all the while, — how vain to expect it! We cannot walk through life on mountain peaks. Both laughter and tears we know, but a safe remove from both is the average felicity.

Another thought which often occurs to me is that we each have a certain capacity for happiness or unhappiness which is pretty constant. We are like lakes or ponds which have their level, and which as a rule are not permanently raised or lowered. As

things go in this world, each of us has about all the happiness he has the capacity for. We cannot be permanently set up or cast down. A healthful nature, in the vicissitudes of experience, is not made permanently unhappy, nor, on the other hand, is its water level permanently raised. Deplete us and we fill up; flood us and we quickly run down. We think that if a certain event were to come to pass, if some rare good fortune should befall us, our stock of happiness would be permanently increased, but the chances are that it would not; after a time we should settle back to the old everyday level. We should get used to the new conditions, the new prosperity, and find life wearing essentially the same tints as before. Our pond is fed from hidden springs; happiness is from within, and outward circumstances have but little power over it. The poor man thinks how happy he would be with the possessions of his rich neighbor, but it is one of the commonplace sayings of the preacher that he would not be. Wealth would not change his nature. His wants, his longings, would still run on as before. It would be high water with him for a season, but it could not last.

I have been told that, as a rule, the millionaires are the unhappiest of men. Restless, suspicious, sated, ennuied, they are like a sick man who can find no position in which he can rest. Our real and necessary wants are so few and so easily met, — food, clothes, shelter! If a little money will bring

The Study, Riverby

us such comfort, what will not riches do? So we multiply our possessions many fold, hoping thereby to multiply our happiness. But it does not work, or works inversely. Do you suppose the millionaire's little girl has any more pleasure with her hundred-dollar doll than your washerwoman's child has with her rag baby? And what would not the millionaire himself give if he could eat his rich dinner with the relish the day laborer has in eating his!

The great depresser and destroyer of happiness is death; but from this blow, too, a healthful nature recovers. The broken and crushed plant rises again. The scar remains, but in the tissue beneath runs the same old blood.

It is undoubtedly true, however, that as time wears on, life becomes of a soberer hue. We are young but once, and need not wish to be young more than once. There is the happiness of youth, there is the happiness of manhood, there is the happiness of old age, — each period wearing a hue peculiar to itself. One of the illusions of life, however, which it is hard to shake off, is the fancying we were happier in the past than we are in the present. The past has such power to hallow and heighten effects! In the distance the course we have traveled looks smooth and inviting. The present moment is always the lowest point in the circle; it is that part of the wheel which touches the ground. Those days in the past that so haunt our memory and that seem invested with a

charm and a significance that is unknown to the present, — how shall we teach ourselves that it is all a trick of the imagination, the result of the medium through which they are seen, and that they, too, were once the present, and were as prosy and commonplace as the moment that now is?

It is equally a mistake to suppose we shall be happier to-morrow or next day than we are to-day. When the future comes it will then be the present, no longer a matter of imagination, but of actual experience. This prosy, care-burdened self will be there, and the rainbow tints will still be in the distance.

The man who is hampered and constrained by the circumstances of his life, thinks his happiness would be greatly augmented by greater freedom, if he could go here or there, do this or that. But the chances are that such would not be the case. For instance, when I see a man going up and down the country looking for a place to settle, to build himself a home, and when I think of my own experience in that direction, I say, happy is the man whom circumstances take by the collar and set down without any choice on his part, in a particular place, and say to him, "There, abide there, and earn thy bread there." He is a free man then, paradoxical as it may seem, — free to make the most of his opportunities without regret. He is not the victim of his own whims or follies. He is not forever tormenting himself with

the notion that he has made a mistake, that if he had gone here or there, he would have been happier. Now he accepts the inevitable and makes the most of it. He goes to work with the more heart because he has no choice. He wastes no time in regrets, he makes no comparisons that disturb him, but devotes all his strength to getting all the satisfaction out of life that is possible.

If one were to make a choice of going on foot while other people had the privilege of wings, he would be haunted by the fear that he had made a mistake, and as he trudged along in the mire, doubtless would envy the people in the air above him; but if he had no choice in the matter and was compelled to go afoot through no fault of his, he would thank his stars that his fate was no worse. When choice comes in and we can elect this or that, then the door for regret, for unhappiness, is opened. We do not mourn because we were born in this place and not that, but if we had been consulted we might fancy some cause of regret.

Yet there is a condition or circumstance that has a greater bearing upon the happiness of life than any other. What is it? I have hardly hinted at it in the foregoing remarks. It is one of the simplest things in the world and within reach of all. If this secret were something I could put up at auction, what a throng of bidders I should have, and what high ones! People would come from all parts of the

earth to bid upon it. Only the wise ones can guess what it is. Some might say it is health, or money, or friends, or this or that possession, but you may have all these things and not be happy. You may have fame and power, and not be happy. I maintain there is one thing more necessary to a happy life than any other, though health and money and friends and home are all important. That one thing is — what? The sick man will say health; the poor man, wealth; the ambitious man, power; the scholar, knowledge; the overworked man, rest.

Without the one thing I have in mind, none of these things would long help their possessors to be happy. We could not long be happy without food or drink or clothes or shelter, but we may have all these things to perfection and still want the prime condition of happiness. It is often said that a contented mind is the first condition of happiness, but what is the first condition of a contented mind? You will be disappointed when I tell you what this all-important thing is, — it is so common, so near at hand, and so many people have so much of it and yet are not happy. They have too much of it, or else the kind that is not best suited to them. What is the best thing for a stream? It is to keep moving. If it stops, it stagnates. So the best thing for a man is that which keeps the currents going, — the physical, the moral, and the intellectual currents. Hence the secret of happiness is — something to do;

some congenial work. Take away the occupation of all men, and what a wretched world it would be! Half of it would commit suicide in less than ten days.

Few persons realize how much of their happiness, such as it is, is dependent upon their work, upon the fact that they are kept busy and not left to feed upon themselves. Happiness comes most to persons who seek her least, and think least about her. It is not an object to be sought; it is a state to be induced. It must follow and not lead. It must overtake you, and not you overtake it. How important is health to happiness, yet the best promoter of health is something to do.

Blessed is the man who has some congenial work, some occupation in which he can put his heart, and which affords a complete outlet to all the forces there are in him.

A man does not want much time to think about himself. Too much thought of the past and its shadows overwhelms; too much thought of the present dissipates; too much thought of the future unsettles. I find that if a horse stands too much in the stable, with too little work, he gets the crib-bite. Too little work makes a kind of windsucker of a man.

I recently had a letter from a friend who, from having rented his farm for a number of years, had had too much leisure. In this letter he writes how well and happy he has been during the season; he

has enjoyed existence, — the gods have smiled upon him and he has found life worth living. Then he told me, not by way of explanation, but as a matter of news, that his head man had been disabled two months before, and the care of the farm had devolved upon himself; more than that, he was renovating a place he had recently bought, remodeling the house, shaping the grounds, etc. Then I knew why he had been so unusually well and happy. He had had something to do into which he could throw himself, and it had set all the currents of his being going again.

About the same time I had a letter from another farmer friend who told me how busy he was, — so many things pressing that there was need of his going in two or more directions at once, not to get rich, but to make both ends meet. And yet he was so happy! (Therefore he was so happy, say I.) Troubles and trials, he says, are few and soon over with, while the pleasures are past all enumeration. "There is so much to be enjoyed, one never gets to the end of it."

This man was too busy to be unhappy; he had no time for ennui or the blues. You see he did not overindulge in the luxury of leisure. He was compelled to take it sparingly, hence it always tasted good to him. The fruit of the tree of life of which we must eat very sparingly is leisure. Too much of it, and it turns to gall on our tongue. A little

too much of those things which we think will make us happy, and we are cloyed, and miserable indeed. The boy would like to dine entirely upon pie or sweetmeats, and we all need the lesson that the dessert of life is to be taken sparingly. Because money is good, do not, therefore, think that riches are an unmixed blessing; because leisure is sweet to you, do not, therefore, imagine you would be happy with nothing to do. My correspondent was too busy and too poor to be cloyed or sated, too much the victim of circumstances to be self-accusing and repining. He had no choice but to go on and make the most of things.

I overheard an old man and a young man talking at the station. The young man was telling of an old uncle of his who had sold his farm and retired to the village. He had enjoyed going to the village, so now he thought he would take his fill of it. But it soon cloyed upon him. He had nothing to do. Every night he would say with a sigh of relief, "Well, another day is through," and each morning wondered how he could endure the day.

In every village up and down the older parts of the country there are several such men; every day is a burden to them because they have nothing to do. They drift aimlessly up and down the street; they loiter in the post-office or lounge in the grocery store or hotel bar-room, — no comfort to themselves and no use to the world. With what longing they

must look upon the farmers that drive in to get a horse shod or to do a little trading and then drive briskly away! How the vision of the farm, the cattle, the sheep, the barn, the growing crops, the early morning, the sowing, the planting, the harvesting must haunt them! Nothing to do! When they were driven and oppressed with work they had thought, What pleasure to be free from all this, to be at liberty to go and come as one likes, with no cows to milk or chores to do! Now they probably have not a hen or a dog to comfort them. These men do not live out more than half their latter days. Nature has no use for them, and they soon drop away; whereas their neighbors who stick to the farm and keep the currents going, reach a much more advanced period of life.

Rust and rot and mildew come to unused things. An empty and deserted house, how quickly it goes to decay! and an unoccupied man, how is his guard down on every side! When the will relaxes or is not stimulated, the physical powers relax also and their power to ward off disease is greatly lessened. Among men of all kinds who have retired from active life the mortality should be and doubtless is much greater than among men of the same age who stick to their lifelong occupations. Here is a farmer just died at eighty-eight who managed his farm till within a few months of his death; here is his neighbor, ten years younger, who retired to the village

several years ago, now wandering about more than half demented.

Oh, the blessedness of work, of life-giving and life-sustaining work! The busy man is the happy man; the idle man is the unhappy. When you feel blue and empty and disconsolate, and life seems hardly worth living, go to work with your hands, — delve, hoe, chop, saw, churn, thrash, anything to quicken the pulse and dispel the fumes. The blue devils can be hoed under in less than half an hour; ennui cannot stand the bucksaw fifteen minutes; the whole outlook may be brightened in a brief time by turning your hands to something you can do with a will.

I speak from experience. A few years ago I found my life beginning to stagnate; I discovered that I was losing my interest in things. I was out of sorts both physically and mentally; sleep was poor, digestion was poor, and my days began to wear too sombre a tinge. There was no good reason for it that I could perceive except that I was not well and fully occupied. I had too much leisure.

What was to be done? Go to work. Get more land and become a farmer in earnest. Exchange the penholder for the crowbar and the hoe-handle. I already had a few acres of land and had been a fruitgrower in a small way; why should I not double my possessions and plant a vineyard that promised some returns? So I began to cast covetous eyes upon some land adjoining me that was for sale. I nibbled

at it very shyly at first. I walked over it time after time and began to note its good points. Then I began to pace it off. I found pleasure and occupation even in this. Then I took a line and began to measure it. I measured off a pretty good slice and fancied it already my own. This tasted so good to me that I measured off a larger slice and then a still larger, till I found that nothing short of the whole field would satisfy me; I must go to the fence and take a clean strip one field broad from the road to the river.

This I did, thus doubling the nine acres I already possessed. It was winter; I could hardly wait till spring to commence operations upon the new purchase. Already I felt the tonic effect of those nine acres. They were a stimulus, an invitation, and a challenge. To subdue them and lick them into shape and plant them with choice grapes and currants and raspberries, — the mere thought of it toned me up and improved my sleep.

Before the snow was all off the ground in March we set to work underdraining the moist and springy places. My health and spirits improved daily. I seemed to be underdraining my own life and carrying off the stagnant water, as well as that of the land. Then a lot of ash stumps and brush, an old apple orchard, and a great many rocks and large stones were to be removed before the plough could be set going.

With what delight I saw this work go forward, and I bore my own part in it! I had not seen such electric April days for years; I had not sat down to dinner with such relish and satisfaction for the past decade; I had not seen the morning break with such anticipations since I was a boy. The clear, bright April days, the great river dimpling and shining there, the arriving birds, the robins laughing, the high-holes calling, the fox sparrows whistling, the blackbirds gurgling, and the hillside slope where we were at work, — what delight I had in it all, and what renewal of life it brought me! I found the best way to see the spring come was to be in the field at work. You are then in your proper place, and the genial influences steal in upon you and envelop you unawares. You glance up from your work, and the landscape is suddenly brimming with beauty. There is more joy and meaning in the voices of the birds than you ever before noticed. You do not have time to exhaust the prospect or to become sated with Nature, but feel her constantly as a stimulating presence. Out of the corners of your eyes and by a kind of indirection you see the subtle and renewing spirits of the season at work.

Before April was ended, the plough had done its perfect work, and in early May the vines and plants were set. Then followed the care and cultivation of them during the summer, and the pruning and training of them the subsequent season, all of

which has been a delight to me. Indeed the new vineyard has become almost a part of myself. I walk through it with the most intimate and personal regard for every vine. I know how they came there. I owe them a debt of gratitude. They have done more for me than a trip to Europe or to California could have done. If it brings me no other returns, the new lot already has proved one of the best investments I ever made in my life.

Oh, the blessedness of motion, of a spur to action, of a current in one's days, of something to stimulate the will, to help reach a decision, to carry down stream the waste and débris of one's life! Hardly a life anywhere so befouled or stagnant, but it would clear and renew itself, if the currents were set going by the proper kind and amount of honest work!

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